



Eldercare

Eldercare and Planning for the Future

If your parents are in their golden years, keep in mind that even gold can lose some of its glow with the inevitable effects of old age -- and sooner or later, older loved ones will need assistance.

"It's never too early to start planning for their future care," says Virginia Morris, author of "How to Care for Aging Parents." "Many children of aging parents wait until there's a crisis, and then they're left scrambling for mediocre options. Everyone can benefit from being prepared and planning far ahead."



In 2012, total spending (public, out-of-pocket and other private spending) for long-term care was \$219.9 billion, or 9.3% of all U.S. personal health care spending. This is projected to increase to \$346 billion in 2040.



Individuals 85 years and older, the oldest old, are one of the fastest growing age segments of the population. In 2012, there are an estimated 5.9 million people 85+ in the United States.



65.7 million informal and family caregivers provide care to someone who is ill with a debilitating disease, disabled, or aged in the U.S.



The vast majority - 80% - of elderly people receiving assistance, including many with several functional limitations, live in private homes in the community rather than in institutions of any kind.

Effective Caregiving: Things to Keep in Mind

Advanced Planning



- Ensure legal documents are prepared, including will, power of attorney, living will and, health-care proxy
- Researching housing options and services available in your parents' community
- Discuss how you can help with their future housing, financial, and medical needs
- Asking them about growing old -- what are their concerns and their worries?

Time to Act



- Your loved ones start losing weight
- They drink more alcohol
- They start neglecting daily responsibilities like paying bills, cleaning, or personal hygiene
- They start walking unsteadily
- Trust your instincts, anything that strikes you as 'Hmmm, is this OK?' probably isn't OK."

Important 1st Steps



- Immediately open a line of communication with doctors
- Obtain a list of your parents' care providers and other contacts
- Determine financial options and insurance coverages
- Talk with friends and loved ones to call in case of emergency

Defining Your Limits



- Decide what you can reasonably do to help, then stick with that plan
- Get help for other needs as they arise
- Accept help early on -- from relatives, friends, neighbors, senior centers or home-care agencies
- Take care of yourself. Get exercise, enough sleep, eat right and go to support-groups for caregivers