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ASSISTED LIVING AND MEMORY CARE INFORMATION



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What is assisted living?

An assisted living residence is a long-term senior care option that provides personal care support services such as meals, medication management, bathing, dressing and transportation.

Services Offered in Assisted Living

If you've seen one assisted living community, you've seen one assisted living community. Each state and province has different licensing and regulation requirements for assisted living providers, which affects the particular services offered at that community. For example, some assisted living facilities are attached to, or share a campus with, a skilled nursing facility. This means these types of communities can provide more advanced medical care. But, in general, Assisted living facilities differ in such details as number of residents, housing style, type of food service, extra amenities, and cost. Licensed facilities provide the basics of all meals, housekeeping, laundry, transportation to errands and appointments, recreational activities, and exercise and wellness programs. They also provide help when needed for activities of daily living, and some medical assistance (see Table 1).

Safety and security

One of the most valuable things that assisted living facilities can offer to senior residents is the safety and security of 24-hour support and access to care if needed. This full-time emergency call system gives residents the ability to be as independent as possible, without the fear of injury or debilitating illness that could be fatal when living alone. New digital health and monitoring technologies are utilized in some senior residences to track residents' personal care habits and activities. This monitoring helps alert staff to changes in residents' health, and makes it easier for caregivers to anticipate residents' needs.

Personal Care/Assistance with Daily Activities

Most assisted living facilities offer approximately two hours of assistance with activities of daily living per day for each resident. In most senior assisted living residences caregivers are available 24 hours a day to help with personal care activities. Residents can set up a schedule for routine personal care such as getting dressed in the morning, eating meals, or an evening bath, and there are always caregivers

available to meet unscheduled needs as well. Many facilities provide on-site pharmacy, physical therapy, salon services for residents, and a staff member to help schedule and coordinate appointments.

Housekeeping and Laundry Services

Housekeeping staff are available to provide emergency cleanup services 24 hours a day (for spills, toileting accidents, and so on). In addition, residents can expect weekly housekeeping services including vacuuming, dusting, cleaning bathrooms and kitchens, changing bed linens, and washing and folding laundry.

Meals

Dining styles provided in assisted living communities may be cafeteria style, room delivery, or similar to dining in a full-service restaurant. Many facilities

customize menu offerings to residents in consideration of personal tastes, medical conditions, and dietary restrictions. Menu selections vary from day to day and meal to meal, and are created to be both nutritionally balanced and satisfying to senior palates.

Social Activity, Entertainment, and Wellness

Most facilities provide common living areas such as small libraries, café areas, and gaming rooms for casual social activity. They also provide a calendar of activities such as gardening clubs, book discussion groups, or movie viewings. Most residents can also choose to engage in activities off-site, such as mall-walking or theatre outings, for which group transportation is provided by the facility. Most communities also have fitness rooms and provide wellness classes such as water aerobics, yoga, tai chi, and walking groups.

Table 1. Basic Services Offered in Assisted Living Facilities

24-hour supervision and security	Social, Health and Exercise programs
Daily meals	Transportation
Basic housekeeping and Laundry	Access to medical services

Transportation

Residents of senior assisted living communities can have access to their own cars, take advantage of scheduled outings such as shopping or entertainment trips, or schedule individual chauffeured transportation as needed for appointments, classes, or errands.

Health Care Services

Assisted living is not a medical model of senior living care, but some health care services, customized to residents' specific needs, are provided. Emergency first aid, medication management, pharmacy services, and medical records maintenance services are usually offered to residents. Most facilities also have a staff physician or nurse who visits residents regularly to provide medical checkups.

There is no single blueprint for assisted living facilities, as resident needs and preferences vary considerably. All good assisted living communities help senior residents enjoy independence and a good quality of life by providing basic health care assistance, personal care, housekeeping, transportation, and a variety of social and recreational opportunities.



Redefining Senior Care

A relatively new concept 25 years ago, today assisted living is the fastest growing long-term care option for seniors. Assisted living facilities, with their wide range of services, provide a senior housing solution for adults who can live independently, but also require some assistance. For many seniors, assisted living provides just the level of care they need to flourish and triumph in their new phase of life. After all, the golden years should be enjoyable-and assisted living has more options than ever before.

Assisted Living Costs

Assisted living costs vary, depending on the following factors:

Type of residence

- Size of apartment (studio, one or two-bedroom apartment)
- Types of services needed
- Geographical location of the community

Many communities charge a basic rate that covers all services, with an additional fee for special services. Most assisted living communities charge a month-to-month rate, but there are also long-term options available. Typically, base rates only cover room and board and a service of daily meals, determined by the assisted living community. Sometimes there are entrance fees, deposits and laundry and housekeeping fees.

Table 2. Fast Facts About Senior Living

Number of U.S. assisted living communities	31,100
Number of apartments:	475,500
Number of residents	735,000
Average length of stay	36 months
Percentage of residents that receive help with three or more ADLs	40%

What is Memory Care?

Memory care is a special kind of care provided to those with varying degrees of dementia or Alzheimer's. It involves creating a structured environment that has set schedules and routines in place to create a stress-free lifestyle, safety features to ensure the health of a senior, and programs designed to cultivate cognitive skills.

Services Offered in Memory Care

For individuals with dementia who require a higher level of skilled care and supervision, memory care units are an ideal option. These units offer both private and shared living spaces. Sometimes they exist as a wing within an assisted living facility or nursing home or they can operate as stand-alone residences. Twenty-four hour, supervised care is provided by staff trained to care for the specific needs and demands of dementia patients. Memory care units offer the same services as do assisted living facilities, in addition to activities that are intended to stimulate the memory of those with Alzheimer's and other dementias and possibly slow the progression of the disease. Activities may involve music, arts and crafts, games, etc. The Environment

at a Memory Care Community Seniors facing Alzheimer's and dementia need an atmosphere they can feel comfortable and at ease in, but one that also keeps them out of harm's way. Because they are experiencing so much cognitive uncertainty, it's important to have a living space that appears familiar to them.

Memory care residents have access to a great variety of services that cater to almost every need (see Table 3).

Physical Differences Between Memory Care and Assisted Living

Memory care units are typically architecturally designed to meet the specific needs of Alzheimer's patients. Unlike some assisted living facilities, memory care units do not have individual kitchens for their residents. This is to keep the stress of those with dementia at a minimum.

While some assisted living facilities do have secure areas to accommodate those with mild dementia, memory care units put an extra emphasis on security to prevent patients from wandering, which is common in those with more advanced dementia. Many locations offer a secure outside area, so that patients can still enjoy being outdoors,

while being unable to leave the property.

Since individuals with dementia may easily become stressed and confused, a special emphasis on creating a relaxing environment is common in memory care units. This may be done by creating a place where residents can gather, such as a television room, painting the halls with bright, colorful paint, and featuring a lot of natural light.

Another common manifestation of Alzheimer's disease is a lack of appetite, so some facilities may have a fish tank displayed in the dining room. This is because studies have found that something as simple as watching fish swim can stimulate one's appetite.

Other Differences

Generally, safety checks are done more frequently in memory care units, and some residences even utilize tracking

bracelets that will sound an alarm if the resident goes too near an exit. Memory care units also tend to follow a more rigid scheduling structure, since those with dementia can easily become stressed in unfamiliar environments and generally do better with routine.

It's common for those with Alzheimer's to have a lack of appetite, so memory care units put forth considerable effort to design meals to address this issue. This may be done by creating a contrast between the color of the food and the plate on which it is served so that residents can easily see their food or by offering flexibility with dishes.

Extra safety measures are also taken on memory care units to ensure the safety of their residents. Examples include locking up items that are poisonous, such as shampoo, laundry detergent, and mouthwash containing alcohol.

Table 3. Basic Services Offered in Memory Care Facilities

24-hour supervision and security	Social, Health and Exercise programs
Daily meals	Transportation
Basic housekeeping and Laundry	Access to medical services
Special Stimulation Activities	

Skills / Training of Staff

In assisted living, staff is trained to assist patients with their activities of daily living, such as helping an individual to bathe and offering assistance with changing clothes. In memory care units, staff are trained to assist with activities of daily living, as well as are trained to handle the specific needs of those with Alzheimer's and other dementias. This training includes understanding how the disease manifests, knowing why dementia patients may exhibit disruptive behavior, how to respond to it, and how to communicate with individuals with dementia.

Costs

For both assisted living and memory care, several variables come into play when it comes to cost. These include the geographic area in which one lives, whether one has a private room or a shared living space, and the amount of care service one requires. However, due to the specialized dementia care that is offered at memory care units, this type of care is overall more costly than assisted living. Memory care facilities go quite a bit further to effectively provide care for those with Alzheimer's or other dementias, with 24-hour supervised care for patients at all stages of the disease.

Memory Care Communities Offer Programs to Help with Behavioral Issues

In addition to leisure programs, therapeutic programs that address memory impairment, wandering and other common dementia behaviors help improve quality of life for residents.

Memory Care Improves Safety and Quality of Life of Residents

Communities have reported a higher quality of life in a number of different areas, including reduced medication and medication side effects; fewer falls, injuries, and hospital visits; increased nutrition and wellness; and greater independence and social interaction. As many as three-fourths of residents even experienced improvement or maintenance of mental functioning.

Memory Care Does not Isolate People with Dementia

Although memory care is often located in a separate unit of a larger assisted living facility, specialized social and therapeutic programming ensures that residents are kept engaged and happy.

