

## **Aging in Place, Benefit or Burden?**

As we get older, aging in place is something that people begin talking about more and more often. Families try to keep grandma home for as long as possible. Or dad does not want to leave the home he has lived in for the past 50 years. Most people pray that they can grow old gracefully at home, independent and living a life of quality.

There are definite benefits of staying in ones home for as long as a person is able. They feel more independent, they are comfortable with their surroundings and the walls themselves bring back years of wonderful memories. However, it is important to realize that not everyone is able to remain at home due to physical and mental conditions that limit their ability to remain independent or jeopardize their health.

According to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC) most injuries to older adults are attributed to falls in the home. In addition, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention more than one-third of Americans aged 65 and older will experience a fall each year and nearly 16,000 of those people will die as a result of those falls.

Therefore recognizing the physical limitations of our loved ones is extremely important. How is their balance? Do they get dizzy when they stand up? Are they able to go up and down stairs easily and on solid footing? If they use a walker or cane do they remember to use it consistently?

What is often harder to determine is if a loved one is mentally able to age in place in their own home or if, because of their memory loss they need more daily assistance. According to the NCIPC after falls, burns and poisonings in the elderly are the next main causes for serious injuries and deaths.

Burns in the elderly are prevalent because as we age or reaction time begins to slow. In addition, due to lapses in memory they may accidentally leave a burner on or put the wrong item in the microwave and not be mentally capable of remembering the proper steps to take care of the problem (call 911, vacate the house etc...). In fact, the elderly are currently the fastest growing age group at risk for fire deaths.

Another item to consider is a loved one's mental ability to manage medications. According to the Alliance for Aging Resource the elderly are six times more like to have an adverse drug interaction, due to accidentally mixing-up their medications, taking too many pills at one time or not taking them as directed, which is why poisoning is also high on the risk list. Adding to this risk is if your loved one has memory loss issues, if so they are at even greater risk as they may not remember that Windex is for windows and not for drinking and may not know what do if they ingest the wrong substance.

As caregivers it is easy to focus on the walls and memories that surround the person, because they are our memories too. However, we forget that memories are not kept by walls, but in our heart and by the people, pictures and items that you surround your loved one with.

By staying focused on our loved one's abilities, safety and quality of life you can determine that no matter how long your loved one ages, the place they do it in will be a benefit to them and feel like home.

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Azura Memory Care offers a unique model of memory care services and programs for those suffering from dementia and Alzheimer's. The company believes in the importance of transforming the culture of care through transformational programming and educational outreach. Azura Memory Care offers 13 locations in Wisconsin including Beloit, Clinton, Eau Claire, Green Bay, Janesville, Kenosha North, Kenosha South, Manitowoc, Monroe, Oshkosh, Sheboygan, Stoughton and Wausau. Visit [www.azuramemory.com](http://www.azuramemory.com) for additional information.