



# ACCESSIBILITY

## How to stay in the place you call home

**A global aging healthcare**, crisis is upon us. Locally in the province of Ontario, 85% of people over the age of 65 want to continue living at home, according to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC). How will society cope with rising long-term care demands not to mention costs that are spiraling out of control at a time when governments are unable to pay, due to growing budget deficits?

**In modern society, most parents find it difficult to accept help from their adult children.**

Thankfully, we can breathe a sigh of relief, as there are alternative solutions to this pending crisis. Today, the most common approach for seniors to live out their golden years is referred to as “aging in place or home health care”. This idea is simple, convenient and is often the preferred choice to live a satisfying and fulfilling life.

The idea is built on a five part strategy known as A.G.I.N.G. ‘in place’. It consists of proven key success factors for remaining at home instead of moving into a long-term care facility.

**Access support.** Family members,

friends and community are essential.

**Guidance.** People with experience can ease the burden of coping with change.

**Independence.** Begins at childhood and is devastating when lost.

**Navigate.** Resources are available when help is needed.

**Garner safety.** Ensure that the environment will not produce a fall or injury.

In modern society, most parents find it difficult to accept help from their adult children. Resistance is not about being a stubborn parent. It is a fact of built-in human neurology that “a parent is the care giver” and this does not change as we age. For children, the best way to assist a parent is to show them how their decisions help you. It is important to have an open honest conversation with your parent about how you both feel about nursing homes. If visiting a parent in a nursing home upsets you or your children, consider offering to visit them more frequently in their own home. Remember, this is the place filled with lifelong memories.

Loneliness is one of the predominant reasons why many seniors choose to move into long-term care facilities. They may suffer from loss of friendships or the ability to get out and socialize. Family, friends and outside resources need to be available if loneliness or depression becomes prevalent.

There are many great resources available online to help guide families through their transition. If a parent is reluctant to accept your concerns and suggestions, do remember that they are still your parents. More often than not, children come to realize that the most effective way to assist a parent in making an important lifestyle decision is to bring in a third party expert. An expert can assist with deciding which options are most suitable for a parent based on their lifestyle and goals.

**The following educational resources will assist in making well-informed choices:**

[www.eldercarecanada.ca](http://www.eldercarecanada.ca)

[www.ccac-ont.ca](http://www.ccac-ont.ca)

[www.cilt.ca](http://www.cilt.ca)

All people want to be able to live a high quality of life independently. When a person suddenly becomes disabled, the fear and loss of independence can be traumatic. At this stage, it is very important that the person received support and assistance in coping with this dramatic change in lifestyle. Most people living with a lifelong disability are often in a position to inspire and motivate others by sharing their story and experiences about how to achieve and live an independent lifestyle.

Government funding continues to shift and adapt to changing needs. While government is reducing support for care in hospitals and nursing homes, they are increasing funding that is directed at making homes accessible. This is occurring because it is essential.

**The following government resources for home modification are available to the public:**

[www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/co/prfinas/index.cfm](http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/co/prfinas/index.cfm)

[www.marchofdimes.ca](http://www.marchofdimes.ca)

[www.ccac-ont.ca](http://www.ccac-ont.ca)

Accessibility is a key requirement for safety. The more accessible the home environment is, the greater the possibility to remain at home for the long term. The responsibility of evaluating the home and its surroundings goes to the job of an Occupational Therapist who is qualified not only in assessing the individual’s functional capabilities, but also in making recommendations for adapting the environment to fit the needs of those residing in the home. Occupational Therapy support and Home Modification specialists can be found at the website [www.ccac-ont.ca](http://www.ccac-ont.ca). Additional assistance may be needed to perform daily routines safely. The Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) is the governing organization individuals need to contact in order to access and benefit from the limited caregiver support, which is paid by the government. Support can also be accessed nationally through private organizations such as Home Instead Senior Care. Additional information can be found at the website [www.homeinstead.com](http://www.homeinstead.com).

The bottom line for a rapidly aging population is about offering an alternative including accessible home environments that increase mobility and reduce the need for care. Accessibility offers tremendous opportunities for Independent Living by removing obstacles while performing everyday routine tasks that are essential for a rich and rewarding quality of life. ■

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