

Q. My mother is starting to have a hard time on her own. I hear that there are different ways to help her, but I am not sure exactly what type of care she needs. Can you explain the different choices that I have?

A. When you have decisions to make about your parents and their health, it's often overwhelming to assimilate all of the information that is out there and make informed choices. Here is a list of some options, listed in general in the order that they would be used:

- ◆ Home Companion Service –a company sends a “helper” into your parent’s home, anywhere from 3 – 24 hours. This helper can provide assistance in many non-medical situations – they can make meals, do dishes, help with the shopping and errands, do light housekeeping, and provide interactive companionship to your parent.
- ◆ Home Health Service –offers different levels of care. A home health aide can provide help with bathing, toileting, and transferring. You may require a nurse with the objective being to help with medication management, wound care and vital signs. They can also assign physical or occupational therapists.
- ◆ Independent Living – this is often the first step in getting your parent out of their own home and into an environment with other seniors who are in the same situation. Independent Living facilities often have some medical care and assistance available nearby, but residents are encouraged to lead their own, independent lives.
- ◆ Assisted Living – the next step in care, Assisted Living communities offer their residents continuously available care in the areas of medicine, therapy, and other personal care assistance.
- ◆ Skilled Nursing – communities in which seriously impaired seniors can live in a safe environment and have the 24-hour care and security that they often need to live comfortably.

Remember, not all seniors fit sequentially into this path – it depends on their needs. Your mother may be ready to start on this path, though, so you should explore her options, particularly the first two types on the list if you want to keep her home as long as possible. Many reputable companies can provide free RN assessments to help you determine your options. Be sure to get your information from accredited local companies, and remember that reputation and recommendations from friends and community resources goes a long way.

You can contact Michael Jones, Certified Senior Advisor for more information at 941-921-4747