

# Is it Time to Move to Assisted Living: The Details

## Eskaton Lodges



The choice to move into assisted living is as individual as the person making the decision. There is no clear-cut, step-by-step template that tells people exactly when it is time to consider assisted living as a long-term care option.

However, certain situations and signs may indicate it might be time to consider alternative living arrangements. Generally speaking, families and their older loved ones begin to consider alternatives when it becomes difficult for the older adult to carry on with important activities of daily living without significant support and assistance from others. Some of the challenges people can face as they age include:

**Loss of Vision:** As a person ages, vision can deteriorate to the point where reading is dramatically impacted and even the ability to navigate within the household is impaired. Consequently, errors in taking medications or falls caused by failure to see objects in their paths may occur. Driving may no longer be a viable option.

**Poor Balance:** Many older adults can become increasingly frail and have a tendency to imbalance, putting them at risk for falls. Repeated episodes of falling or imbalance are a signal that the person could possibly benefit from an environment constructed to minimize risk of falls.

**Memory Loss; Forgetfulness:** Memory loss and forgetfulness can dramatically impact the well-being and safety of an older adult living alone. Simple matters, such as turning off the stove, become possible safety hazards if memory loss or forgetfulness becomes an issue. Management of medications, remembering when and how much to take, also becomes a risk factor.

**Fatigue:** The reality is that many older adults reach a point when they are no longer able to consistently care for themselves or their home. Meal preparation, home maintenance, and personal care can become overwhelming.

**Loneliness:** For some people, isolation and loneliness can become a factor. When regular interaction with others becomes infrequent, older adults can quickly lose their sense of involvement and motivation. Even lifelong introverts can reap the many benefits of social interaction, including reduced risk of depression, increased cognitive function, improved physical fitness, lower blood pressure and reduced stress.

**Dementia:** When Alzheimer's disease or dementia is diagnosed, it is often time to consider alternative care to maintain the safety and quality of life for the individual.

**Physician Prescribed:** At times, an older person's physician will determine whether or not he/she can be left at home alone or unattended due to health conditions that require constant monitoring.

Many times the family and future resident are able to make a joint decision about when it is time to consider moving into assisted living. This type of decision-making allows for some research and time to explore the very real concerns of the older person and leads to greater satisfaction with the choices made. The prospect of moving can be very unsettling; it requires moving from a known and seemingly secure situation to an unknown situation where the older adult may worry about loss of control and independence. Families and potential residents should visit communities together to determine the type of community that best suits the older person's needs. For family members forced to make a decision for their loved one, such as in the case of Alzheimer's disease or dementia, the burden of responsibility can seem immense.

Perhaps the best advice is to follow your heart to know exactly when it is time for you and your loved one to make the transition. Change is rarely easy for anyone. The good news is that most older adults, once they weather the upheaval of transition, report that assisted living has offered them enhanced quality of life.