

# Aging in Place What Does That Mean?

by **NANCY WEBRE, BS, MS of Evergreen In-home Care Services**

**A**ging in place is defined as the ability to live in one's own home and community independently, safely and comfortably, regardless of age, income or ability level.



Our population is aging and we are all living longer than anyone expected. Baby Boomers (born between 1947 and 1964) are looking at their future as many of them have become caregivers for their parents. Boomers are looking at their own homes so they can retire comfortably and safely. The advent of social security predicted people would retire at 65 and life expectancy was 72 years of age. Futurists are now predicting that by the middle of this century, living beyond 100 years will be the norm.

What does it take to accomplish aging in place as we live longer? Most adults would prefer to age in place. Studies indicate approximately 80 percent of adults between the ages of 50 and 64 report they would prefer to stay in their current residence as they age. The desire to age in place is serious issues since one third of American households are home to one or more residents 60 years of age or older.

Given the statistics of Medicare expenditures related to fall related injuries alone, interventions to making aging in place successful should be looked at in a serious light. Aging in place is not just adding grab bars to the shower or receiving meals on wheels, but also includes support issues such as managing emotional/physical stress and balancing responsibilities as a caregiver.

It includes a combination of home modifications and other community support resources to accomplish a means to an end. In this day of modern technology, aging in place has come to the forefront of innovative ideas to allow seniors to remain at home with the ongoing development and implementation of assistive technology.

Many organizations across the nation have sprung up to address this phenomenon as an attempt to help America's communities prepare for the aging of our population. Smart homes for example, help to promote aging in place by integrating a range of monitoring and supportive devices. This includes physiological monitoring, functional monitoring for emergency detection and response, safety and security monitoring and assistance, social

interaction monitoring and cognitive and sensory assistance. Smart houses include technology such as pendants which read commands in the form of hand gestures.

This includes opening and locking doors, turning lights on and off, etc. There is also a monitoring system that informs family

members of a person's daily activities, health status and potential problems. Some smart homes have refrigerators and pantries that can detect food consumption and expired products and laundry machines that notify the resident when it is time to do laundry. Many rooms can be specially designed to aid an individual's living situation.

In addition to advanced technology, families will have to continue to deal with support issues and accessibility. For those who are aging in place and their caregivers, all the above issues must be dealt with in a way that empowers people to make informed decisions about their lives and care. Following is a list of items to consider while Aging in Place:

- Talk with your children. Take control of your life now and share your thoughts about aging in place with your family. Carefully consider with your family the risks involved in staying in your own home as you age.
- Make a care plan. This is crucial in order for one to keep control from the standpoint of finances and health concerns. Care plans can be updated over time as an individual's care needs change with the aging process.
- Make your home safe. Home modifications may be required in order to stay at home. Carefully consider the financial impact those modifications may have.

• Support at home. Consider what kind of in-home support you or a loved one may require to stay in your home. Take time to research in-home care and companion services that are available in the community.

• Consider hiring a geriatric care manager. A geriatric care manager can help evaluate and coordinate in-home services to help with this process. They can provide professional guidance in selecting and coordinating services.

Aging in Place can be a successful experience for parents and families if the process is carefully thought out and planned.  
Nancy Webre, BS, MS, CEO / Owner, Geriatric Care Manager. 541-389-0006. [www.evergreeninhome.com](http://www.evergreeninhome.com).



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What does it take to accomplish Aging in Place as we live longer? Most adults would prefer to age in place. Studies indicate approximately 80% of adults between the ages of 50 and 64 report they would prefer to stay in their current residence as they age. The desire to age in place is a serious issue since one third of American households are home to one or more residents 60 years of age or older. Given the statistics of Medicare expenditures related to fall related injuries alone, interventions to making aging in place successful should be looked at in a serious light. Aging in Place is not just adding grab bars to the shower or receiving meals on wheels, but also includes support issues such as managing emotional/physical stress and balancing responsibilities as a caregiver. It includes a combination of home modifications and other community support resources to accomplish a means to an end. In this day of modern technology, aging in place has come to the forefront of innovative ideas to allow seniors to remain at home with the ongoing development and implementation of assistive technology. Many organizations across the nation have sprung up to address this phenomenon as an attempt to help America's communities prepare for the aging of our population. Smart homes for example, help to promote aging in place by integrating a range of monitoring and supportive devices. This includes physiological monitoring, functional monitoring for emergency detection and response, safety & security monitoring and assistance, social interaction monitoring, and cognitive & sensory assistance. Smart houses include technology such as pendants which read commands in the form of hand gestures. This includes opening and locking doors, turning lights on and off, etc. There is also a monitoring system that informs family members of a person's daily activities, health status and potential problems. Some smart homes have refrigerators and pantries that can detect food consumption and expired products and laundry machines that notify the resident when it is time to do laundry. Many rooms can be specially designed to aid an individual's living situation. In addition to advanced technology, families will have to continue to deal with support issues and accessibility. For those who are Aging in Place and their caregivers, all the above issues must be dealt with in a way that empowers people to make informed decisions about their lives and care.

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