



How To Decide About Assisted Living

by Michael Newman

(NAPSA)—Here's news about getting old:



- The U.S. population aged 65 or older will double during the next 30 years—by 2040, one in five Americans (81+ million) will be 65 or older.

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- 80 percent of seniors have at least one chronic health condition—50 percent have at least two.

- By 2030, 7.7 million adults 65 or older will have Alzheimer's.

- Extreme stress can take as much as 10 years off a family caregiver's life.

All this suggests that more and more people will be deciding whether to move to an assisted living community. These are designed for people who still have and want some independence but need more care than most families can provide.

Five signs may suggest someone needs assisted living.

1. Failure to Thrive—Your senior has difficulty with daily activities; doesn't eat well; isn't showering as often as before; can't keep the house as clean; isn't dressing as well.

2. Chronic Health Conditions—Your loved one may be getting sick more often; losing or gaining weight; becoming more frail; having difficulty walking or with balance issues; or needing more time to recover from colds.

3. Behavioral Changes—He or she has become more forgetful, more agitated and is having mood swings.

4. Medication Management Issues—Your mom or dad is forgetting to take prescribed medications.

5. Socialization Declines—Conversations are getting shorter; there's less community involve-



Moving to an assisted living facility can be easier on the whole family if you do a little research first.

ment and less engagement with friends.

If these signs are present, it may be time for an assisted living community. These tips may help:

- **Early Intervention**—The sooner you talk about it, the better.

- **Early Education**—Encourage your mom and dad to visit people they know at a community. Some places even offer tours where you can meet the staff, see the facilities, visit with residents, have a meal in the dining room and gather information needed for an informed decision.

- **Involvement in the Decision-Making Process**—What would the person concerned like in a facility? The more everyone is engaged in the process, the smoother the transition can be.

- **Family Involvement**—This is critical. Remain involved with regular visits, especially on holidays, birthdays and so on, and engage in special outings. Make sure you're spending quality time.

- **Be Honest**—Don't say they'll be coming home soon if they won't. It will be far worse when reality sets in.

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