

One Step at a Time

Managing Care Solo

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Managing care is extremely important, especially when living independently as we rely on this to remain healthy and to be at home safely for as long as possible. So, what is included with managing care? This can be a variety of things such as medications, personal care, hygiene, exercise, and overall well-being. Managing care can be overwhelming but we're here to help. Let's break it down!

Medications

Taking medications on time is extremely important, but sometimes it can be difficult to remember to take them on time on your own. There are some simple answers. First, you can consider using a smartphone pill reminder app to help you take your medication or set an alarm for the times during the day when you need to take medication. However, we know this doesn't always work for everyone. A couple of other options could be having your medications placed in bubble packs by a pharmacy, using a pill timer cap that tells you what time you last opened the bottle, or if you're not into the technology craze, an old school digital watch with multiple alarms can also do the trick! (Thanks to Hugh C. for the watch idea!)

Not only is it important to know when to take your medication, but it's also important to know what you are taking. Making a list of your medications noting times, the dosage you take, and any side effects can be valuable to have for several reasons. Additionally, you want to record any supplements or over the counter (OTC) medications such as Advil, Tylenol, or even antacids that you may be taking. Sometimes supplements or OTC medications can cause serious

side effects or interact with medications that you may be taking or could be given, so it's important to have this noted. The Aware in Care Kit that comes with a Parkinson Association membership has a handy notepad that can be used to record your medications and has multiple sheets so you can distribute these to your pharmacists, doctors, or any other healthcare professionals as needed! This is a great way for you to keep track of your medications if you're on your own.

Next, if possible, have all your prescriptions filled at one pharmacy. A pharmacist can ensure that you aren't at risk to any potential drug interactions if they have all the information regarding your medication. However, if you must use more than one pharmacy for any reason, be sure that you are providing updates about the medications you're currently taking to both pharmacists to ensure they have access to this information so they can best support you! Don't be afraid to ask your pharmacist any questions you may have about your medication either! They are there to help and are more than willing to sit down with you and answer any questions you may have.

Creating a Safe Environment

We all want to stay at home for as long as possible, but safely managing that may require some adjustments or modifications to your home. Changing your home can be intimidating or difficult and, in some cases, costly. The good news is that there may be financial help available and/or practical, but affordable solutions. By making sure the environment you live in is safe, you are prolonging your independence, providing yourself autonomy, and mitigating the risk of injury.

And when your mobility starts to change, keeping your residence comfortable and accessible will not only allow you to stay at home longer, but also safely. So, what modifications can you get for your home? Modifications can include things such as grab bars in the shower, bed railings, ramps to avoid or minimize the use of stairs, or adjusting the hinges on doors to allow them to open further or in a different direction to create more room. When you're flying solo, it's important to create a safe environment early on as it can take some time to implement some of these modifications.

Location, Accessibility, and Transportation

It's important to start thinking about your home's location, accessibility, and method of transportation early on, especially if you live in a rural or suburban area that requires a lot of driving. If you're on your own and no longer able to drive do you have a means of transportation? Or would it be more beneficial to live somewhere that has sufficient access to public transit? It's important to take as much into consideration as possible. How much time it takes you to get to services such as shopping or medical appointments? Would it be worth it to consider a move that would give you more freedom through public transportation? Sometimes it can feel like we are thinking way too far into the future, but when you're on your own you want to be prepared early on. This way you can ensure that you have the most autonomy in your life and allow yourself the opportunity to explore all your options thoroughly.

Homecare, Socializing and Programs/Activities

When living alone, homecare is extremely important, especially if we want to stay at home for as long as possible. However, it can be hard to figure out if you need homecare, what services you might need from homecare, and how much time of homecare you may need. If you're ever unsure, you can always put in a request for an assessment. By doing so, you can meet with an occupational therapist or registered nurse to explore your options and provide you with their recommendations.

Isolation can be a major cause of emotional distress for single seniors, so it is vital to create opportunities for socializing! There are so many fantastic programs

out there that are eager to have you be a part of them! Finding a program that matches your interests or even looking into local day programs can be a great way to meet people and stay connected. I know it can be a little scary going into something new where you might not know people or what to expect. That's okay! The great thing about a lot of these programs is they might let you observe or do a trial run before signing up depending on the program. This is a great way for you to experience the possible benefits of programming without having to commit right away. By doing this, you can get a sense if the program is a right fit for you, ease some of the nerves you may have about joining, and above all else, meet new people and possibly develop some life-long friendships!

Planning your Finances and Investigating your Options Early

It's no secret that higher levels of care such as assisted living or in-home care can be expensive. Consider making a budget with anticipated expenses early on to help you evaluate the pros and cons of your situation and determine what's the best route for you in the future. By exploring your options early, you can find one that is right for you when the time comes. When you're on your own, you are your own advocate. By investigating options early and determining what you want, you can ensure that down the road your wishes are fulfilled! It'll allow you to take control over your future and give you the power to make the best decisions for yourself.

It's normal to feel confused, vulnerable, or even frustrated when you realize you may not be able to do the things you used to be able to do. Different feelings might arise such as feeling guilty about asking for help or feeling uncomfortable having "strangers" in your home. By acknowledging these feelings and talking about them it can help you manage your feelings and cope with the changes. If you have an open mind and a willingness to try new things, you may be able to prolong some aspects of your independence for longer!

Finally, be patient with yourself and give yourself grace. Changes are a typical part of aging and although shifts in your level of independence can be frustrating at times, sometimes new experiences and situations can lead to developing new friendships or discovering new possibilities!