



Senior Health Guide:
**How to Improve
Physical and Social Activity**

Compassionate
Care  HOME HEALTH SERVICES, INC

www.CompassionateCareMi.com

Why Be Strong and Social?

Ensure your senior loved ones are physically and socially active to help them live longer and better lives. Seniors with only a few friends, limited social opportunities and poor exercise habits suffer both mentally and physically. Healthy aging is highly influenced by the level of physical and social activity that your loved ones enjoy on a daily basis. Older adults with or without a disability are more likely to be physically inactive, socially isolated and obese.

Disease Limits Quality of Life

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 80% of older Americans have at least one chronic disease or degenerative illness, while 50% have two or more. The top causes of death for U.S. adults aged 65 or older are heart disease, cancer, stroke and diabetes. These chronic diseases can limit daily activities and reduce the quality of life for seniors. The tragedy of these leading killers is that they are often preventable.

About this Guide

In an effort to promote healthy, independent lifestyles for seniors, we created this guide to offer information and ideas to help increase physical activity and social activity for adults aged 65 and older. Where appropriate, we also offer specific resources that can be used by Michigan residents.



How Physical and Social Activity Helps

Although the risk for disease and disability clearly increases with advancing age, the major contributors to these issues are smoking, poor diet and physical inactivity. A positive health routine and active social life can help reduce chronic pain, alleviate depression and sleep problems, improve memory and increase mobility. When increasing physical and social activity for an older adult, it is important to take dedicated action, try new things and celebrate small victories.



Physical Activity



Seniors who regularly exercise have a better quality of life. Physical activity helps seniors reduce their risk of falling and chronic diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke and some types of cancer. The National Institute of Health states that daily exercise increases the ability to perform daily activities, elevates mental health and improves longevity.

Why is Physical Activity Important for Seniors?

1. Improves balance to help prevent falls.

Falls are the most preventable type of physical health risk for seniors. Falls are a major contributor to a diminished quality of life, hip fractures, disability, early admission to nursing homes and even death. Falls are the leading cause of injury deaths and the most common cause of injuries and hospital admissions for trauma among adults aged 65 or older.

To help prevent your senior loved one from falling, address these risks:

- **Environment Risk Factors**, including trip hazards in the home. To learn about how to prevent falls and improve safety in the home, visit our website at www.CompassionateCareMI.com to request our guide “**Senior Home Safety Evaluation Guide: 13 Checklists to Help Identify Safety Issues in the Home.**”
- **Personal Risk Factors**, including poor balance, medication confusion and vision problems. To help address these personal risk factors, you may need to monitor medications and perhaps schedule a visit with an optometrist. To help improve balance, the key is to improve physical fitness through activity and exercise.

Exercise and physical therapy can address many factors that seniors face, including leg muscle weakness, poor endurance, musculoskeletal stiffness, slow reaction time to balance disturbances and slow walking speed. According to the National Council on Aging, exercise can reduce the risk of falling by 12% and the number of falls by 19%.

2. Improves health to help prevent disease.

Older adults have some of the highest rates of poor physical health and activity limitation in the United States. If your senior loved one wishes to remain living independent in their home, it is imperative to be physically healthy. Unfortunately, many seniors do not get the exercise and nutrition they need. Regular physical activity substantially contributes to healthy aging because it can help prevent and control diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure and other health issues.

Below is data from the “National Report Card on Healthy Aging: How Healthy Are Older Adults in the United States?” for persons aged 65 or older.

- **70.2% of seniors are NOT eating the recommended 5 or more fruits & vegetables daily**
- **34% of seniors have at least one disability**
- **31.9% of seniors have no leisure physical activity time**
- **20.2% of seniors are obese**
- **6.3% of seniors have frequent mental distress**
- **5.5 is the average number of days per month that a senior is physically unhealthy**

Obesity is a risk factor for 4 of the 10 leading causes of death in the United States (coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke and several forms of cancer). Obesity also can worsen conditions such as arthritis, and it is associated with activity limitations and feelings of sadness and hopelessness. Maintaining a healthy weight can become more difficult with age, but it is possible with a good exercise and nutrition plan. Exercise increases metabolism and builds muscle mass, helping to burn more calories, achieve an ideal weight and improve overall wellness.



Exercising for Seniors

Exercise helps seniors achieve improved immune function, heart health, blood pressure, bone density and digestive health. Seniors who exercise also have a lowered risk of several chronic conditions, including Alzheimer's disease, diabetes, obesity, heart disease, osteoporosis and colon cancer. The U.S. Department of Human Services states that a "5-7% reduction in body weight decreases the risk of Type 2 diabetes, reduces blood pressure and improves lipid profiles."

Exercise also provides other benefits for seniors, including:

- Improved mobility and balance to help reduce the risk of falling.
- Better sleep.
- Higher self-confidence.
- Increased brain activity (to help prevent memory loss, cognitive decline and dementia).

Seniors should focus on exercises that are enjoyable and compliment their capabilities and lifestyle. A fun and varied exercise routine helps to ensure a long-term commitment to restore balance, flexibility, strength and endurance. Exercise also improves quality of life and increases the likelihood to remain living at home.

The ideal senior exercise program should include:

- **Strength Training.** Building muscle can help strengthen bones, improve balance and coordination to reduce falls, provide relief from arthritis pain and reduce blood glucose levels.

Exercise tip: At least 2-3 times per week, exercise to help build strength in the arms, stomach, back and legs. Use light weights that are under 10 lbs or use resistance bands.

- **Balance & Flexibility.** Improve muscle coordination, injury recovery time and reaction time with exercises that focus on balance and flexibility. *Exercise tip: Stretch the muscles and improve their tone with small daily exercises that give big results, such as yoga or pilates.*
- **Aerobic Exercise.** Use aerobic exercise to get the heart pumping and improve overall stamina. Exercises to choose from include walking, swimming, biking, gardening, tennis, running and



many other activities. Walking, which is the most common type of physical activity among older adults, is a great way to increase stamina, get fresh air and socialize. *Exercise tip: Vary the type of aerobic exercise to keep from getting bored and make your muscles work in different ways. If you want to exercise for 30 minutes but don't have the time, break it up into three 10-minute exercise sessions throughout the day.*

With any type of exercise, it is best to start small and build your way up by slowly increasing the intensity, length and weight. Before starting any new exercise, please consult your doctor. While exercising, if something feels wrong, such as sharp pain or unusual shortness of breath, simply stop. You may need to scale back or try another activity.

How Much Should Seniors Exercise?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends the following guidelines for people 65 years of age or older that are generally fit and have no limiting health conditions:

Option 1: 2 hours and 30 minutes (150 minutes) of moderate-intensity aerobic activity (i.e., brisk walking) every week and muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days a week that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders and arms).

Option 2: 1 hour and 15 minutes (75 minutes) of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity (i.e., jogging or running) every week and muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days a week that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders and arms).

Option 3: An equivalent mix of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic activity and muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days a week that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders and arms).

Where Can Seniors Exercise?

To help keep your exercise routine in the long-term, work-out in different locations throughout the week. Exercising can be done almost anywhere, including:

- **Home.** Ask a trained health professional for an individualized in-home program.
- **Community or Senior Center.** Join group classes at a local senior center or community center.
- **Gym.** Find a conventional gym and ask for a free session with a trainer to learn how to use the equipment and set-up a routine that fits your needs and goals.
- **Mall, Park or School.** Depending on the weather, you can choose to walk indoors or outdoors at various locations in your community, including the mall, parks, trails, neighborhood sidewalks and school hallways or outdoor track. For safe walking outside, review the walking path for concrete in disrepair, potential trip hazards, traffic safety and possible crime issues.

Exercise Safety Tips

Before starting new exercises, please review these exercise safety tips.

- 1. Get medical clearance.** Before starting any exercise routine or program, talk with your doctor about pre-existing conditions, health risks, medication timing, meal plan adjustments, activities you should avoid and ongoing pain or discomfort. It is imperative for seniors to consult their doctor about their exercise routine, but it is especially important for those with chronic conditions, such as heart disease and diabetes.
- 2. Ensure equipment safety.** When using equipment at home or at the gym, check to make sure it is working properly. If you are using equipment that is new to you, ask someone to show you how to exercise with it properly to reduce the risk of injury.
- 3. Prevent falls.** Ensure all equipment and furniture is secure and stable before starting an exercise. If you rely on furniture for stability, such as a couch or table, make sure it will not tip or slide. Clear the exercise area of any clutter, cords, rugs or pets to prevent a fall.
- 4. Dress appropriately.** When exercising, wear clothing that is comfortable and loose, with

fabrics that breathe easily, such as cotton. Make sure your shoes fit properly with good traction on the bottom.

5. Drink water. Have filtered water in a reusable bottle and take frequent drink breaks to replenish your body throughout the workout.

6. Stop if needed. Stop exercising immediately and call your doctor if you feel dizzy or short of breath, develop chest pain or pressure, break out in a cold sweat or experience pain. Also stop if a joint is red, swollen or tender to touch.

At-Home Physical Activity Tips

Seniors that include exercise in their daily routine are more likely to stick with it. The best way to make exercise part of your daily routine is to include it with other activities, such as watching television, preparing meals or lying in bed.



Exercises you can do at home include:

- Leg lifts, arm lifts and knee bends
- Squats (use stable furniture for balance support)
- Head, hand and ankle stretches
- Kegel exercises (to strengthen abdomen and improve urinary incontinence issues)

Ideas for Stretches and Exercises While Watching TV

- **Neck Side Stretch:** Slowly tip head to the left while pressing right shoulder down. Hold 10-30 seconds, 3-4 times on each side. Repeat, tipping head right.
- **Head Turn Neck Stretch:** With shoulders back and down, turn head to the right towards right shoulder. Repeat, turning head left. Repeat 6-8 times on each side.
- **Ankle Circles:** Sitting with both feet flat on ground, pick right foot off the ground and circle the ankle clockwise 6 times. Circle the ankle 6 times counterclockwise. Switch and repeat for left ankle. Variation: Write your name on the floor with your big toe.
- **Marching:** Begin in sitting position with both arms bent 90 degrees. Raise right knee 45 degrees to the front. Set right leg down and raise left knee to the front 45 degrees. When right knee is raised left arm is moved forward, and right arm moves backward (like marching). Repeat, alternating legs for 30-60 seconds. Precautions: Modify height the knee is lifted if needed.
- **Chair Stands:** Sit at front edge of chair with arms crossed over chest or placed on thighs. Stand up completely and sit back down. Repeat 4-8 times.
- **Arm Circles:** Circle arms (palms face up) counterclockwise and then clockwise. This time in a larger circle, ending with arms extended out. Repeat for 30-60 seconds.

To vary the routine or increase the intensity of these exercises, use household items such as:

- Stable chair or furniture
- Resistance arm or leg bands
- Light dumbbells (1-5 lbs) or a can of soup (12-16 oz)

Social Activity



Regular social activity can help seniors have an increased quality and length of life. After retirement, regular social interaction can completely fade unless other activities are enjoyed. Seniors that are socially isolated can have decreased physical and mental health, increased use of alcohol and tobacco, and decreased interest in physical activity.

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Without social activities, it is easier for seniors to mentally and physically deteriorate. Social activity for seniors is just as important as physical exercise, according to a 2009 study published in the Archives of Internal Medicine. To maintain speed, dexterity and muscle strength, seniors need social interaction. In the study, socially inactive seniors experienced physical decline at a rate 1/3 more rapid than those who were socially active, regardless of the amount of exercise. Many other studies show that social activity, participation and integration have astonishing positive effects on overall health and well-being.

Many other studies show that social activity, participation and integration have astonishing positive effects on overall health and well-being. When seniors get regular social activity, it helps them:

- **Be connected to others.** We all have a need to feel needed. Part of being human is connecting with others and building relationships. Social activities that encourage meeting new people and getting together with friends can help seniors feel connected to the world outside their doorstep. This social stimulation helps build and maintain both mental and physical health.
- **Feel a sense of accomplishment.** When

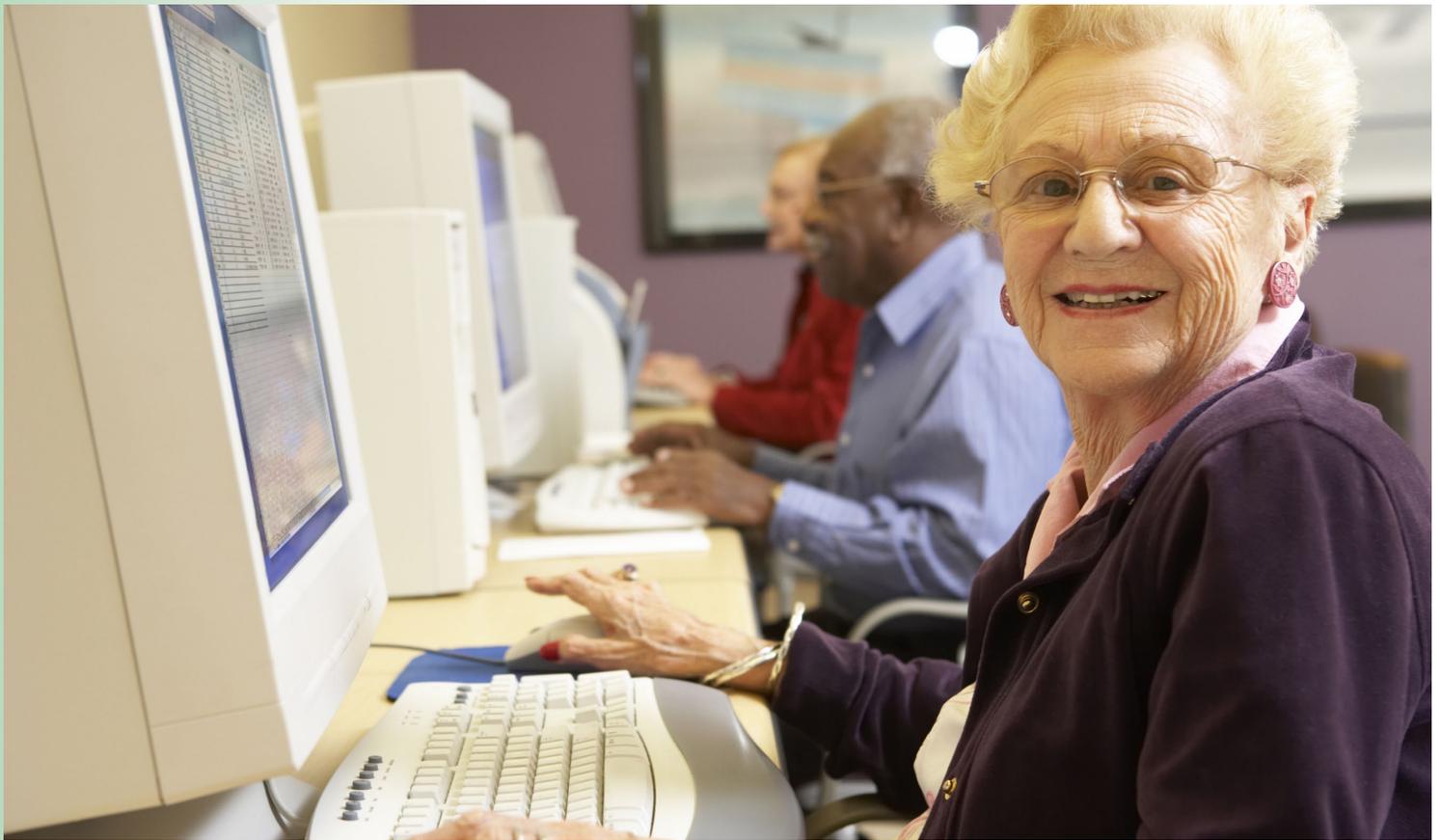
enjoying activities that involve developing and demonstrating a skill, seniors find the new challenges and experiences help to build confidence and establish a sense of control.

- **Enjoy mental stimulation.** Social activities can bring new and exciting experiences that put seniors' minds to "enjoyable" work. Whether it is learning a new computer program or game, meeting someone new or speaking a new language, the experience feeds the brain and helps to keep it sharp. Numerous studies have proven that seniors with social activity experience memory loss at a drastically slower rate.

Tips to Increase Social Activity

Older adults that live at home have many options and resources to increase their social activity:

- 1. Volunteer.** Many nonprofit volunteers are seniors who wish to contribute and make a difference in the lives of others. To find opportunities to volunteer in your area, call 1-800-VOLUNTEER or go to www.1-800-volunteer.org. You can also contact your local churches, schools and community centers for volunteer opportunities.
- 2. Take a class.** Many local colleges, universities and community education centers offer courses that are interesting to older adults, including art, food, music, computer skills, foreign language, technology, travel, etc. A good resource to find these types of classes is an Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes offer noncredit courses with no assignments or grades to "seasoned" adults over age 50. Since 2001, philanthropist Bernard Osher has made



grants from his foundation to launch OLLI programs at over 120 universities and colleges in 49 states and the District of Columbia. To find an OLLI near you, visit www.osherfoundation.org. In Michigan, there currently three OLLI's:

OLLI at Aquinas College

1607 Robinson Road SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49506
Phone: (616) 632-2430
Email: olliinfo@aquinas.edu
Website: www.aquinas.edu/olli

OLLI at Saginaw Valley State University

7400 Bay Road
University Center, MI 48710
Phone: 989-964-4475
Email: olli@svsu.edu
Website: www.svsu.edu/olli

OLLI at University of Michigan

2401 Plymouth Rd. Ste. C
Ann Arbor, MI 48105-2193
Phone: 734-998-9351
Email: germedoll@umich.edu
Website: www.olliumich.org

There are also a number of other organizations that offer classes, including businesses, community centers, chambers of commerce and adult community education organizations. Contact local school districts for the nearest adult community education center.

3. Join a social group. There are a number of social groups that seniors can join to meet new people and socialize with friends including book clubs, bird watching groups, museum memberships, art groups, writing groups, theater/movie groups, community choir or band, etc.

4. Start a hobby. There are many social groups for seniors that focus on specific hobbies and crafts, including knitting, quilting, photography, painting and scrapbooking. Ask a local community centers what they offer and if they give senior discounts.

5. Join a religious group. Church is usually a big component of a senior's social life. Religious organizations often organize social outings, group meals and community events for the elderly. There are also non-affiliated spiritual groups that can be found online.

6. Be politically active. Whether interest lies with local, state or national politics, there are opportunities to join a cause and volunteer at all levels of the political spectrum.

7. Join an online group. The internet is for everyone. Seniors are increasingly becoming tech-savvy and there are online social groups for all types of interests, from scrapbooking to train collecting.

8. Enjoy physical exercise. This can be as easy as organizing an afternoon walk club, or spending time in the park with the grandkids. Senior fitness and community centers have classes that can fit almost any senior's needs and abilities.

9. Go on senior trips. Many Michigan travel agencies and community centers have senior trips to fun locations around Michigan and beyond that are for seniors only. Trips destinations may include a casino, site seeing, art/culture, adventure and more.

Physical Activities that are Social

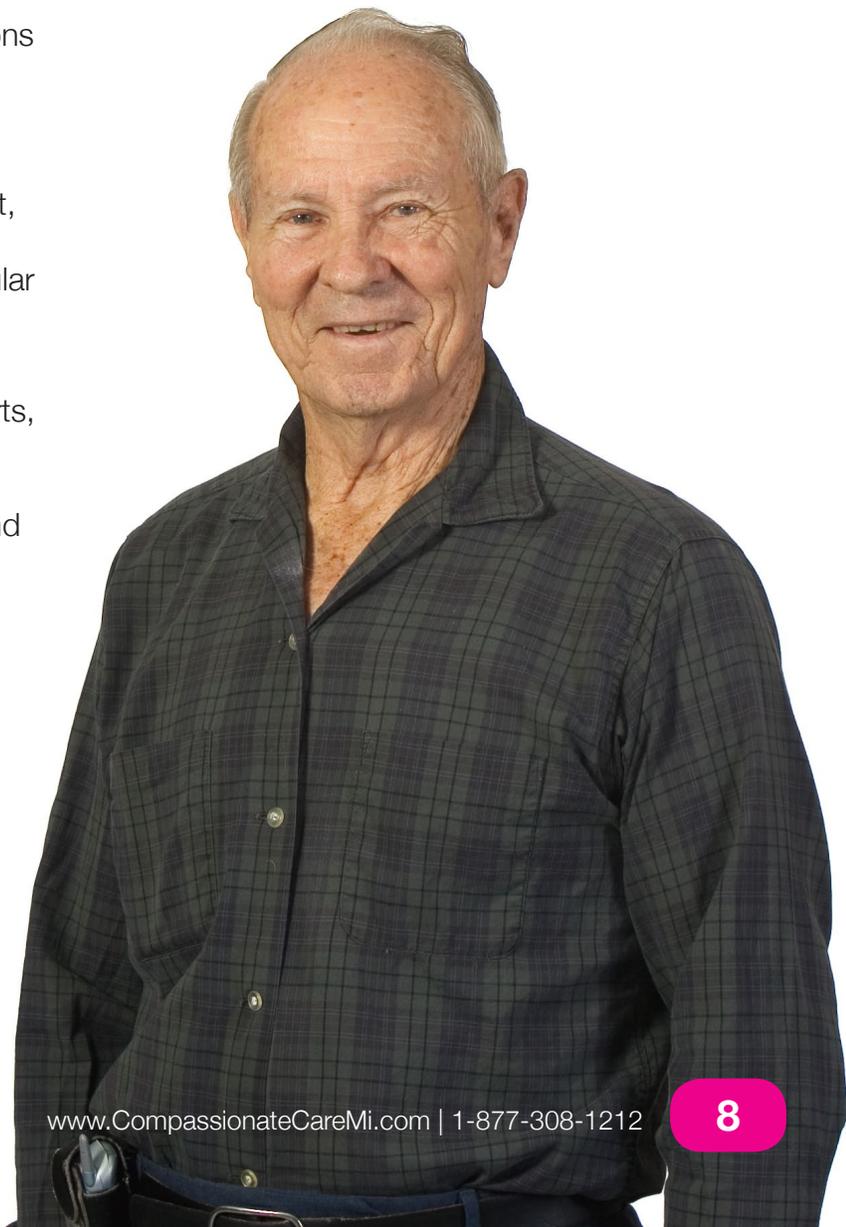
Seniors do not need to exercise in isolation. In fact, combining exercise with socializing can make it more enjoyable and increase the likelihood of regular exercise. Ideas for combining physical and social activity include:

- Backyard games (croquet, badminton, lawn darts, horse shoes and shuffleboard)
- Biking
- Boating, canoeing, kayaking, paddle boating and rowboating
- Creative expression
- Dancing
- Gardening
- Golf
- Hiking and nature walks
- Michigan Senior Olympics (visit www.michiganseniorolympics.org)
- Pet therapy
- Playing in the park with grandchildren
- Seated chair exercise classes
- Senior sports leagues
- Swimming

- Tai Chi
- Tennis
- Walking for charity (Relay for Life and other walk/run events)
- Walking groups (mall, school, park)
- Water aerobics
- Yoga

Local Newspapers

Check your local newspapers for a senior section or senior insert. Many Michigan newspapers have information, events and news specifically for seniors. For example, there is a quarterly insert called "Senior Times" in the Ogemaw Herald and Arenac Independent. And the Tuscola County Advertiser has "Senior Horizon" that is published monthly. Check with your local newspapers for information they provide for seniors.





Contact Us

We proudly provide in-home services throughout most of Michigan and we continue to expand our service area daily within the state.

Please feel free to contact us at **877-308-1212** or **www.CompassionateCareMi.com** with any questions, concerns or a request for a free in-home consultation.

A Compassionate Care representative is available by phone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to answer your needs because your care is our priority.

Compassionate Care for Your In-Home Care Needs

Compassionate Care Home Health Services, Inc. is your resource to promote health and independent living for your senior loved ones. We are dedicated to providing high-quality, personalized home health services including personal care, private duty nursing services, respite care, homemaking, therapies and more.

Whether your loved one is suffering from Alzheimer's, Dementia, cancer, COPD, stroke, diabetes and/or other illnesses, or needs some other form of support, Compassionate Care Home Health Services, Inc. is there for you. We take pride in building relationships of trust and compatibility between our caregivers and clients. Our caregivers are specifically trained to meet the individual needs of each client to ensure safety and comfort, wherever they call home.

