

## Preparing For A Move To A Care Facility

Preparation ahead of time can make the move from home to a long-term care facility emotionally and practically easier. As caregiver, your focus will likely be on what the move means for your family member, but it is also important to recognize the major change you will experience.

Expect a broad range of emotions. These could include guilt, or possibly relief that the responsibility of care is no longer solely on your shoulders. You may even have second thoughts about your decision. These are all normal reactions. Remind yourself that it may no longer be safe for your family member to live at home and you alone may be unable to provide the care they need.

If there are several family members involved in the caregiving, it is helpful to have a meeting as the process unfolds, so everyone is informed. But be prepared. The process may cause mixed emotions, even if everyone has agreed it is necessary.

The person moving into the facility should also be involved in the decision-making as much as possible. Fear of the unknown can make an admission more difficult. Collect as much information as possible about the facility. If time permits, visit the facility before moving day with your loved one. Meet the staff, and possibly participate in some social activities.

Make a plan for the kind of support you will need during this time. Bring a friend along on moving day or plan to have someone at home when you return so you are not alone.

On the more practical side, ask the facility for information on room sizes, furnishings provided by the facility and any limitations on the type or amount of personal belongings that can be brought in. These guidelines will often be dependent on the facility, the set-up of the room and the care your family member requires. Objects brought from home, such as photographs, favourite items and books help a person feel more comfortable in his or her new surroundings.

More clothing than usual may be needed due to laundry cycles. Try to avoid clothes that require special care and ensure clothing is easy to put on and take off. Label all clothing. Some facilities have their own method for attaching labels, which remain intact during laundering.

To avoid loss, also mark (with permanent ink) the following items with your family member's name: glasses, dentures, hearing aids, canes, walkers, and wheelchairs.

Review with the staff the kind of care you provided - what worked and what didn't. Your valuable information will help the facility staff create a care plan.

While the caregiving role shifts upon facility placement, caregiving does not end. Your loved one's personal care will be provided by someone else, but you will still provide emotional support, visit, advocate for them and perhaps take them to appointments.

*By Barbara Small*

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