

changing  
circumstances

creating caring communities

changing circumstances  
Answers to key questions for seniors and those that care for them



Bethany  
Care Society

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changing circumstances

**Information for seniors and those who care for them**

Are you wondering if it is time to consider some lifestyle changes for you or a senior you care about? Do you have questions about how aging affects health (and how it doesn't), about what services and supports are available, and about how to personally support those you care about? This quick reference will help you start this exploration of changing circumstances, and find answers to common questions.

## Are falls a normal part of aging?

While falls are a real concern for older adults (one in three seniors living in the community and 40% to 50% of those living in facilities will experience a fall each year), falls are NOT a normal part of aging. However, several common conditions of aging that affect balance, flexibility, fatigue, weakness, and vision do increase the risk of falls. Being aware of these risk factors, as well as making changes to behaviour and living spaces, will make falls less likely.

### Tips for reducing falls

- **Exercise regularly.** Regular, moderate physical activity increases muscle strength and balance. Discuss an exercise program with your healthcare provider.
- **Have your physician review medications.** Be sure to report all medications you are taking, both prescription and “over-the-counter.”
- **Do a home safety inspection.** Eliminate hazards and add safety modifications. A Safety Checklist is available at the Lifeline website listed on the next page.
  - **Take extra care.** Take your time and think ahead.

- **Discuss any fears with healthcare providers.** The more they know, the more they can help you.
- **Eat a sensible, balanced diet.** Good nutrition provides more energy and a stronger body.
- **Wear the right shoes.** Select sturdy, low-heeled shoes with rubber soles for grip, and make sure they are fitted properly.
- **Subscribe to a personal response service.** Knowing that prompt help is available at the push of a button gives you the confidence to be as active as possible.

**References:**

Seniors' Falls Injuries in Alberta, Government of Alberta publication

Fall Prevention: Breaking the Cycle, Lifeline publication

**For more information:**

**Bethany Lifeline/Philips Lifeline**

1-866-832-5426 (in Calgary) or

1-800-338-1411 (in Alberta)

**Red Deer Lifeline** (403) 343-4550

[www.lifeline.ca/content/english/medical\\_alert\\_service/tools\\_tips/falls\\_fitness](http://www.lifeline.ca/content/english/medical_alert_service/tools_tips/falls_fitness)

**Finding Balance Alberta**

[www.findingbalancealberta.ca/](http://www.findingbalancealberta.ca/)

## What is dementia?

Dementia is more than forgetfulness – it is a syndrome consisting of a number of symptoms that include loss of memory, judgment and reasoning, and changes in mood and behaviour. These symptoms may affect a person's ability to function at work, in social relationships or in day-to-day activities. In some cases, these symptoms may also be caused by other treatable conditions, such as depression, thyroid disease, infections or drug interactions. However, if the symptoms are not treatable and progress over time, they may be due to damage to the nerve cells in the brain.

Alzheimer's disease, the most common form of dementia, accounts for 63% of all dementias in Canada. The indications of Alzheimer's disease include a gradual onset and continuing decline of memory, as well as changes in judgment or reasoning, and the inability to perform familiar tasks. These are not a normal part of aging, and it is important to see a doctor for assessment.

## 10 Warning Signs

- Memory loss that affects day-to-day function
- Difficulty in performing familiar tasks
- Problems with language
- Disorientation of time and place
- Poor or decreased judgment
- Problems with abstract thinking
- Misplacing things
- Changes in mood and behaviour
- Changes in personality
- Loss of initiative

Regardless of the form of dementia, individuals can obtain information and support from the Alzheimer Society.

*Reference:* Alzheimer Calgary

### **For more information:**

Alzheimer Calgary (403) 290-0110 or  
1-877-569-4357

[www.AlzheimerCalgary.com](http://www.AlzheimerCalgary.com)

Alzheimer Red Deer and Central Alberta  
(403) 346-2540

**Bethany Airdrie**



## What about medications?

Because seniors tend to have more than one health problem, they may receive multiple prescriptions or combine prescription drugs with over-the-counter products or with natural remedies. The combinations can produce adverse reactions, such as memory loss, sleepiness, agitation and confusion.

### Tips for medication safety

- Talk to health care professionals about alternatives to medication.
- Tell all doctors and the pharmacist about all medicine being taken (prescription, over-the-counter or herbal) as well as use of alcohol and/or tobacco.
- Read the instructions on each medication container to check for side effects of combining with another medication.
- Take medication exactly as prescribed. Ask about any alternative instructions in case you forget to take it.
  - Have a list of medications currently being taken, and make someone aware of it.
  - Wear a bracelet or necklace to show any medication allergies.

- Report reactions or side effects to the doctor or pharmacist.
- Use one pharmacy for all prescription needs.
- Discard any medicines that are past the “best before” date.
- Ask for and obtain all the information on the use and side effects of a new medicine.

From: The Safe Living Guide: A guide to home safety for seniors, Public Health Agency of Canada

**For more information:**

[www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/publications/public/injury-blessure/safelive-securite/index-eng.php](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/publications/public/injury-blessure/safelive-securite/index-eng.php)

People living in a care centre or receiving home care should discuss medications with the registered nurse or Director of Care.

**Bethany Calgary**

## Am I a caregiver?

If you provide ten or more hours each week of care and/or support to someone — a spouse, a relative or a friend — you are a caregiver! Don't forget to care for yourself while you care for someone else.

### Tips for Caregivers\*

- Remember to **be good to yourself**. Love, honour and value yourself. You're doing a very hard job and you deserve quality time, just for you.
- When people offer to help, **accept the offer**. Support and practical help are available to assist you in giving good care, while looking after yourself.
- **Seek support** from other caregivers. There is great strength in knowing you are not alone.
- There is a difference between caring and doing. **Be open to technologies and ideas** that promote your loved one's independence.
- **Educate yourself** about your loved one's condition. Information is empowering.
- **Trust your instincts**. Most of the time they'll lead you in the right direction.

- **Watch** for signs of depression. Don't delay in getting professional help when you need it.
- **Grieve for your losses**, and then allow yourself to dream new dreams.
- **Stand up for your rights** as a caregiver and a citizen.

\*From the Family Caregiver Centre

**For more information:**

Family Caregiver Centre, Alberta Health Services (403) 955-1674

[www.familycaregivers.ab.ca](http://www.familycaregivers.ab.ca)

**Bethany Cochrane**



## Is it time to consider different living arrangements?

Always involve the senior in decisions about living arrangements.

Top ten signs that a senior may require a change in living arrangements

- Less active, tendency to stay at home
- Home is less well maintained than before
- Change in quality or frequency of communication
- Fewer invitations to their home or a change in visiting patterns
- Unopened bills and other mail
- Unkempt home, laundry/dishes piling up
- Unexplained weight loss
- Blackened pots from a stove being unattended or other damage to the environment
- Bruises or other signs of trauma from falls or difficulty navigating around the house
- You're experiencing concern for their well-being.

## Ten things to think about when selecting seniors' housing or continuing care

- Define your requirements and distinguish between wants and needs.
- Where should the residence be located?
- What is the demeanour of the residents currently in the home?
- How much can you afford to spend?
- Discuss quality with Alberta Health Services.
- What is the demeanour of employees and are they certified?
- Tour the kitchen and ask to review menus.
- What types of activities are available?
- What types of amenities are offered?
- Arrange for tours and a sampling of services.

**Reference:** The Care Guide

### **For more information:**

**The Care Guide** 1-800-311-2273

[www.thecareguide.com/Assessment/Assessment.aspx](http://www.thecareguide.com/Assessment/Assessment.aspx)

**Government of Alberta**

[http://www.programs.alberta.ca/](http://www.programs.alberta.ca/Living/9546.aspx)

[Living/9546.aspx](http://www.programs.alberta.ca/Living/9546.aspx)

**Alberta Senior Citizens' Housing Association**

(780) 439-6473

[www.ascha.com/registry\\_tips.asp](http://www.ascha.com/registry_tips.asp)

## What kinds of housing options are available?

The continuum of housing for seniors in Alberta offers every senior the opportunity to find the option that suits his or her needs.

The housing available falls into three categories: independent living, living in a supportive community and continuing care.

### Independent Living

Independent living options include affordable and fair-market priced housing properties for seniors and persons with disabilities who want to enjoy an active, independent lifestyle. Generally, independent living properties focused on seniors provide access to amenities and services to meet their needs. Units are available for rent, purchase or life-lease.

### Living in a Supportive Community

This is an attractive option for independent seniors who want to live in a community setting and other seniors who may need some assistance with activities of daily living. Residents of supportive communities enjoy

the convenience of meals, light weekly housekeeping, personal response systems, and life enrichment activities. As more services are needed, they can be provided. Care support may be provided through Home Care programs or as part of the monthly rate.

## Long Term Care

Long Term care provides around-the-clock professional care and support for people with complex health needs who are unable to remain at home or in a supportive living environment. Residents come to long term care referred by Alberta Health Services, after being assessed by a health care professional.

### **For more information:**

Bethany Care Society

[www.bethanycare.com](http://www.bethanycare.com)

Kerby Housing Registry

[www.kerbycentre.com/housing.php](http://www.kerbycentre.com/housing.php)

Alberta Senior Citizens' Housing  
Association Housing Registry

[www.ascha.com/registry\\_search.asp](http://www.ascha.com/registry_search.asp)

Alberta Continuing Care Association

[www.ab-cca.ca](http://www.ab-cca.ca)

## How can I make the most of a visit?

Changing circumstances require changes in how you visit. It is natural to feel a little uncertain or uncomfortable in new situations, and both you and the senior you care about will be in a period of adjustment. It is important to maintain regular contact to provide reassurance that he or she is an important part of your life.

Activity-based visits make the most of your time together. Some seniors can still do many of the things they did before, such as needlework, painting, gardening, taking walks and going shopping. For others, choices of activities may be limited to the kinds of things that can be done while sitting together.

There are two parts to a visit—looking forward to the visit and the visit itself—so try to plan your visits ahead of time to allow the enjoyment of anticipation.

As people age, physical changes can affect their ability to communicate or interact with others.

## Tips for enhancing communication

- Place yourself at eye level
- Show respect with your words and actions
- Be aware of changes in mood or behaviour during a visit and adjust what you do and say
- Keep a normal conversational tone and use facial expressions and gestures to emphasize your meaning
- If someone is hard of hearing, move closer and try to speak slower and more clearly
- Be patient and give time to respond
- Filling every moment with “talk” is not always possible or necessary

### **For more detailed information:**

[www.bethanycare.com](http://www.bethanycare.com) and look for About Us/Family and Visitor Information

**Bethany CollegeSide**



## What things make good gifts?

You know your loved one better than anyone, but as circumstances change you may want to consider different kinds of gifts than you've given in the past. Seniors living in their house or apartment often have "everything" and those who have moved to lodges or care centres have reduced their possessions to fit in smaller quarters.

Focus on activities that you can enjoy doing together, that the senior enjoys in his or her spare time, or that are part of the social life surrounding him or her. Think of individualized gifts that will make life easier, more enjoyable, or safer. And don't forget that the gift of time is the greatest gift of all!

Some suggestions:

- Flowers
- Gift certificates/prepaid cards for haircuts or other services
- Gifts that can be shared with friends (such as chocolate, cookies or fruit)
- Lotions and soaps
- Large print books
- Magazine subscriptions

- Adaptive clothing, slippers with good tread
- Large dial or amplified telephone
- Lap board
- Rechargeable batteries & charger
- Magnifier
- Hobby supplies
- Puzzles, playing cards, games
- Rolling shopping cart
- Donations to favourite charities, especially organizations supporting seniors

**For more ideas:**

[www.bethanycare.com](http://www.bethanycare.com) and look for About Us/Family and Visitor Information  
[www.eldercareteam.com/public](http://www.eldercareteam.com/public)

**Bethany Sylvan Lake**



## What community services are available, and how can they be accessed?

There are many community services available specifically for seniors. These services range from social and leisure to immigration and settlement, to support services and more.

Costs and access to these services varies depending on the situation and services. Staff and volunteers strive to provide services that support, respect and enhance the life of seniors in the community.

Seniors' services are listed under "Seniors" in the Yellow Pages.

In addition, there are key information and referral organizations that focus on linking seniors to the services they want or need:

For health services such as home care:

Alberta Healthlink 1-866-408-5465 or  
your local Community Health Centre  
In Calgary: 403-943-5465

For links to other services  
available:

In Red Deer and area:

Golden Circle Senior Resource Centre  
(403) 343-6074  
[www.goldencircle.ca](http://www.goldencircle.ca)

In Calgary:

Calgary Seniors' Resource Society  
(403) 266-6200 [www.calgaryseniors.org](http://www.calgaryseniors.org)  
Kerby Centre  
(403) 705-3246 [www.kerbycentre.com](http://www.kerbycentre.com)

**Sundance on the Green Foyer**



## Who is responsible for costs of housing and services?

Responsibility for costs depends on the situation and choices an individual makes.

There are private housing options available in which all costs are the responsibility of the resident. These kinds of options can be found for various levels of affordability.

The *Seniors Lodge Program* offers single or double bed/sitting rooms, meals, housekeeping services, linen/laundry and recreational services. Lodge rates vary, depending on services provided.

The *Seniors Self-Contained Housing Program* offers apartment accommodation for low income seniors. Rent usually is based on 30% of household income.

Arrangements and/or costs for the community services available are usually the responsibility of the client.

*Supportive living* provides a home-like setting where residents receive some daily support. These services may include 24-hour monitoring, security, meals, housekeeping, and life enrichment activities. Residents pay a monthly rate and can purchase more services as needed. In some cases, the province may cover personal care and health services after an assessment by a health professional.

In *long term care*, the province covers basic costs of nursing and personal care, some therapies and most prescription drugs. Residents are responsible for accommodation fees, which cover meals, housekeeping, linen service, utilities, etc. Additional services can also be purchased separately, including transportation to appointments, companion care and complementary therapies such as physiotherapy and massage.

**For more information:**

Alberta Seniors and Community Supports  
Seniors Information Line

1-800-642-3853

[www.seniors.alberta.ca/seniorshousing/](http://www.seniors.alberta.ca/seniorshousing/)

## Is there any financial support available?

Alberta Seniors and Community Supports provides five programs:

- Alberta Seniors Benefit Program
- Special Needs Assistance for Seniors
- Dental Assistance for Seniors Program
- Optical Assistance for Seniors Program
- Education Property Tax Assistance for Seniors Program

The Government of Canada administers:

- Income Security Programs
- Canada Pension Plan
- Old Age Security
- Guaranteed Income Supplement
- Allowance Benefits
- Home Adaptations for Seniors'

Independence

Qualified veterans, certain civilians and their dependants or survivors can receive assistance from Veterans Affairs Canada.

Local municipalities often provide financial support for transportation through reduced rates.

Chronic disease support groups, such as the MS Society, may provide support in special circumstances and for specific needs.

**For more information:**

Alberta Seniors and Community Supports  
Seniors Information Line

1-800-642-3853

[www.seniors.alberta.ca/financial\\_ assistance/](http://www.seniors.alberta.ca/financial_assistance/)

**In Red Deer and area:**

Golden Circle Senior Resource Centre

(403) 343-6074 [www.goldencircle.ca](http://www.goldencircle.ca)

**In Calgary:**

Calgary Seniors' Resource Society

(403) 266-6200 [www.calgaryseniors.org](http://www.calgaryseniors.org)

Kerby Centre

(403) 705-3246 [www.kerbycentre.com](http://www.kerbycentre.com)

**CollegeSide Gardens Foyer**



This booklet contains information for those exploring changing circumstances related to aging. Each section offers excellent sources of information and support for seniors and families during this time of change.

Bethany Care Society provides a broad spectrum of housing and services for seniors and persons with disabilities throughout southern and central Alberta.

### **Independent Living:**

#### Calgary:

- Bethany Village
- Riverview Village
- Sundance on the Green

#### High River:

- Mundy Park Apartments

### **Supportive Living:**

- Bethany Airdrie
- Bethany Cochrane
- Bethany Calgary
- Bethany Sylvan Lake
- CollegeSide Gardens (Red Deer)

### **Long Term Care:**

- Bethany Airdrie
- Bethany Calgary
- Bethany Cochrane
- Bethany CollegeSide (Red Deer)
- Bethany Harvest Hills
- Bethany Sylvan Lake

### **Services:**

Bethany/Philips Lifeline  
(throughout Alberta)

Adult Day Support  
Program

- Bethany Harvest Hills
- Bethany Cochrane

If you would like to learn more about housing and service options at Bethany Care Society, call us at (403) 210-HOME or 1-888-410-4679.

Or visit [www.bethanycare.com](http://www.bethanycare.com).



*Bethany Care Foundation* was established as a registered charity in 2004. The Foundation Board of Directors and staff members work together to raise funds for Bethany Care Society and heighten the profile of the organization in the community. Financial gifts from individual donors, corporations and community associations support the Foundation's commitment to create caring communities for seniors and persons with disabilities at Bethany Care Society.

1001 – 17 Street NW, Calgary, AB, T2N 2E5  
(403) 210-4655 [www.bethanycarefoundation.com](http://www.bethanycarefoundation.com)  
email: [BCF@bethanycare.com](mailto:BCF@bethanycare.com)

Charitable Registration Number:  
87675 4102 RR0001



**Bethany**  
Care Society

Established in 1945, *Bethany Care Society* is a voluntary, not-for-profit organization dedicated to building caring relationships with the residents and clients we serve. We offer continuing care, supportive living, independent living and services that celebrate the wisdom and spirit of seniors and persons with disabilities throughout southern and central Alberta.

Airdrie • Calgary • Cochrane • Red Deer  
• Sylvan Lake • High River

1001 – 17 Street NW, Calgary, AB, T2N 2E5  
(403) 210-HOME

**[www.bethanycare.com](http://www.bethanycare.com)**

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