



Wise Ways to Plan Ahead for Long-Term Care Expenses

By Lydia Chan, Alzheimer's Caregivers

If you are getting ready for retirement, you may be getting ready for the prime of your life. You're more confident, carefree, and full of life than ever before. However, even with all of that vigor, you may find yourself needing to look into long-term care for yourself or your spouse at some point in the future. The fact is that most people need this kind of care in their lifetime, but a lot of people are caught off-guard when that inevitable need arises. So, how can you be smart and stay ahead of the game? By putting a plan together ahead of time to pay for long-term care. Below are some helpful tips you can use to get started.

Remember That Medicare Will Not Pay for Long-Term Care

Most seniors would agree that Medicare is a priceless financial tool for paying for healthcare. Those healthcare costs tend to increase as each year passes, so having coverage for doctor's visits and [prescriptions](#) can go a long way in protecting you. When it comes to long-term care, it's important to note that Medicare does not view this as any kind of health care. Instead, stays

in a nursing home or assisted-living center are labeled as [custodial care](#). This is because most of the help that is needed comes in the form of assistance with daily routines, such as getting dressed and bathing. The only time Medicare can help with long-term care expenses is when the services rendered are direct medical services. So, what is a smart senior to do? How can you pay for long-term care without Medicare? Keep reading to find the answers.

Know That Planning Early Gives You More Options

Medicare may not be very helpful if you, a spouse, or other senior family member needs care in a nursing home. However, there definitely way to pay for this care, especially if you [plan ahead](#). Let's say you start putting together your long-term care contingency plan a few years before retirement. Well, you may be in a better position to sign up for [long-term care insurance](#). This kind of added coverage is different from typical health insurance in that it is specifically meant to take care of those custodial expenses that are so vital for nursing home and assisted-living residents. By signing up in your 50s or younger, you can take advantage of much lower premiums (those can increase by as much as 4 percent in your 60s). Over time, that can add up to big savings and some added peace of mind as you [prepare for retirement](#).

Keep Quick Ways to Access Cash In Mind

Let's say you don't plan ahead for long-term care, or maybe you already find yourself needing pay for it now. You need to know other ways you can get funds for long-term care expenses, and which options may be best for you. Do you or your loved one own a home? If you do, you can leverage that home equity in order to take out a loan or you can sell the property if the profits will be enough to cover those [nursing home bills](#). Need to continue living in that home? Then you could use a [reverse mortgage](#). With this kind of home equity "loan," you have no financial obligation until the homeowner either passes away or moves out. At that time, you have an option of paying off the loan or letting the bank sell the property to cover the balance. There also other options for [paying for care](#), from setting up an annuity to using VA benefits, so you are likely to find a way to get the care you or a loved one's needs.

As an older adult, you know a thing or two about planning ahead and being prepared, so don't let yourself be blindsided by the costs of long-term care. Whether you or a loved one needs it now, or in the future, knowing how to pay can take a lot of pressure off of you.

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