How to have the early conversations
Australians are enjoying better health and living longer than ever before, so it’s no surprise that many older people have their sights set on living in the safe and familiar comfort of their own homes – for as long as possible.

Yet chances are, there will come a time when ageing or illness will make living at home more challenging.

General tasks such as household cleaning, personal grooming or even taking the right medication at the right times, may eventually become more difficult. Your parent, grandparent or other family member may gradually struggle to complete once familiar tasks.

If and when this happens, it’s totally natural that many older people avoid asking for help. They may not want to acknowledge that they can’t cope with particular tasks, may not want to be seen as a burden, or they may be concerned about being “put in a home”.

Yet while accepting support can be perceived negatively, when it’s delivered well it is actually a life enhancing opportunity.

Regardless of your family’s situation, it’s important to plan ahead – and it starts with having a conversation about in-home care.
Reality check

The idea of sitting down Mum, Dad or Grandma to tell them they’re not coping can send the best of us running for the hills! It’s a tough conversation to have, but early action and good preparation, not avoidance, is undoubtedly the best tactic.

Broaching the topic of in-home care early, when your parent or relative is well, not only helps to reduce anxiety and stress for you, it also provides them with more confidence about their future, particularly their ability to live independently.

With the right care and support – such as help with dressing, buying groceries or getting to appointments – many older Australians thrive, deeply appreciating – and making the most of – the opportunity to continue to live independently in their own home and local community.
When do we need in-home care?

Use the checklist on the following page as a guide to identify the signs that extra help at home is needed.
Checklist

Does your relative:

☐ Mix up their medications, feel forgetful or confused with once-familiar tasks, or fail to remember important appointments

☐ Feel lonely and sad, or frustrated and stressed

☐ Prefer to stay home rather than interact socially

☐ Have less interest in personal hygiene and grooming habits, or struggle to shower and get dressed

☐ Have difficulty getting up from a seated position or with walking, balance and mobility

☐ Leave their mail unopened or have an overflowing mailbox

☐ Receive late payment notices, or struggle to pay their bills or buy groceries

☐ Make payments to unfamiliar people or businesses

☐ Have a poor diet or experienced weight loss

☐ Have difficulty with or overlook completing household chores

☐ Have less interest in their hobbies and social activities

☐ Sleep more and have less energy, or

☐ Need transportation to regular medical appointments?
Why start the conversations early?

Many people postpone the conversation about accessing in-home care until something goes badly wrong, such as a nasty fall or medical emergency, and forces the discussion. This is also often a time when family are stressed and emotional meaning that it’s really not the best time to have the discussion for the first time.

Having the conversation early about your parent’s or grandparent’s plans for the future gives everyone involved time to carefully consider the options and better prepare for the future. That way, when the time does arrive, you’ll already have made a lot of the decisions.

Taking early steps, such as occasional care for housekeeping or meal preparation, or companionship support if you’re away on holiday is a great entry point. It can help your relative become more comfortable with change, while they can also begin to develop a trusted relationship with their caregiver. And it may then become something that they have chosen to do, rather than something they have to do. And that’s a far more positive position to start from!
Staying at home

More Australians want to live out their retirement in their own home. A government report reveals while 76% of people aged 60+ prefer to age at home, declining health is one of the major factors prompting people to move.

Research shows older people have better physical and mental health when they live in the same place for a long time. In one report, 52% of people living in aged care facilities had symptoms of depression compared with just 10-15% of those living in the community.
Initiating the conversation can be the most difficult part of the move to in-home care. Here are some hints to help you embark on the early conversations:

• Find the right time and place. Sitting down to talk over a cup of tea or coffee when there are no distractions, appointments or expected visitors can help your loved one feel more comfortable about discussing their future.

• Find out their goals and plans for the future. What do they want to get out of the next ten years and where would they like to live in the short and long term?

• Let them know you support them in this and want to help them achieve it.

• What do they need help with? Ask them if they would like some help with cleaning their home, assistance with shopping and errands, personal care provision, or someone to take them on outings.

• Try not to focus on what they can’t do, but rather on what will be possible once arrangements are in place: “With a bit of help with cleaning you’ll have more time to catch up with your friends.”

• Let them know that they can live in their own home for as long as possible. Tell them how Absolute Care & Health can help them maintain their independence and support them to live their life to the full while in the comfort of their own home. Absolute Care & Health will also match them with the right caregiver based on their personality and interests as well as practical care needs. Most of all, the caregiver will also become their companion - someone they can chat and laugh with.
“The only way you’ll get me out of this house is in a box!”

If this chestnut is one of your parent’s or older relative’s favourites (and you wouldn’t be alone if it is!) then in-home care is worth considering because it makes living independently at home an ongoing reality.

In-home care offers one-on-one tailored care, support and companionship from a trained, professional caregiver. Most importantly, in-home care is designed to ensure your family member can continue to live his or her life to the full – safely and with high level care, support and respect.

“Remaining in your own home can keep you connected to your family and social networks. We know seniors have better emotional wellbeing and quality-of-life when they are supported to maintain their independence in the comfort and familiar surrounds of their own home.”

Maria Deveson Crabbe,
Absolute Care & Health CEO
Absolute Care & Health offer a range of in-home care services to suit your family’s needs

- **Going home care.** For seniors transitioning from hospital to the home. Caregivers can provide transportation home, help your loved one settle in, and provide essential comfort and support.

- **Occasional care.** Need help quickly or at particular times? This flexible option offers an extra pair of hands exactly when it’s needed, whether it’s for a few hours, a few days, or every now and then. Caregivers can assist with transportation, household chores, meal preparation, hygiene and grooming, errands, provide live-in care, and offer personal companionship and support.

- **Ongoing care.** Providing families with peace of mind, caregivers can assist with errands and outings, household chores, personal support, medication and wound management, meal preparation, offer live-in care, and companionship.

- **Total care.** Whether it’s due to an accident, illness, disability or ageing, this premium support service provides up to 24-hour care, dementia support, nursing and complex care, and medication management. Caregivers work with medical professionals and can also carry out household chores, meal preparation and outings.
Caregivers provide companionship

“Our caregivers are the very heart of our business. They enable us to go beyond the delivery of crucial care services to provide the essential element of companionship. Our caregivers ensure our clients are able to continue to live their lives the way they want to. They open up new opportunities and become new friends. Put simply, they make our clients happier.”

Maria Deveson Crabbe,
Absolute Care & Health CEO
We’re here to help 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year.

Our phones are attended around-the-clock to give you immediate access to a care specialist. Call us today on 03 9827 8899.

We’ll send a registered nurse and a care manager to meet with you, and find out more about your family member’s needs, personality and lifestyle. We’ll help you work out what care would work best, how much it costs, whether you can access government funding and answer any questions you may have.

We are firm believers in ageing well and living independently and we’re here to make the transition to in-home care as easy and as comfortable as possible.

After all, there’s no place like home.
Government home care reforms

Older Australians now have more choice and control when it comes to accessing home care services. Federal government reforms are enabling consumers, for the first time, to direct funding to the in-home care provider that best suits their individual needs.

If you would like more information, or help navigating the aged care system, please call us on (03) 9827 8899 and we can talk you through what support is available, and how to access it.