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Tips for Creating a Plan of Care for Seniors

Anything can happen at any moment. Seniors can fall, heart attacks can occur. A range of any other tragedies can come out of the blue. With one moment, entire lives can change, leaving us to wonder what to do next. As our loved ones age, it becomes possible that their health and well-being can change at a moment's notice, leaving caregivers with questions they can't answer, a to-do list that they never saw coming, and added hardship. Sudden health changes can cause caregivers confusion, stress and mayhem if plans of care are not in place. Being unprepared can leave a loved one unsettled and worried.

To give them peace of mind that they will be taken care of, put a plan of care in place. [*Elder Care Needs Can Change in an Instant*](#), an article by Carol Bradley Bursack, shares ways to prepare for an unforeseen event. To be well-equipped to handle any sudden life changes, follow these tips.

- **Plan ahead.** Have a conversation with your loved one about how they would like you to handle things in the event of a life-changing emergency. Ask them some questions which could make the conversation come up a little easier, such as where they would prefer to stay. Would your loved one prefer home care? Would they be more comfortable in an assisted living community?

Visiting different assisted living communities and skilled nursing facilities with your loved one can be beneficial, according to Carol. This helps them tell you what they like or do not like about one specific community or which they like the best of all. Have them make a list of their preferences, in order, so you can be sure you are making an educated decision if an emergency were to occur.

- **Get any essential documents together.** Keep any documents your loved one might need together in a safe location. Make sure that a list of information, such as phone numbers, medications, allergies and known illnesses, is placed somewhere where medical professionals may see them, the article states. Be sure to have other family members' phone numbers listed in the event you are not reachable.

Have copies, not originals, of your loved one's Medicare, insurance cards or other health information in their wallet or handbag. Originals of these documents should be kept in a secure place where you can access them in case of an emergency. This will allow you to fill out the necessary paperwork for medical professionals and help you to prove that you are serving as the caregiver for your loved one.

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- **Put it in writing.** As seniors age, they may be more likely to have a serious injury that can make them unable to make decisions on their own, or they may develop memory impairments, such as Alzheimer's disease or dementia. Injuries or diseases that make it hard for a loved one to make decisions can leave caregivers guessing as to what care they would prefer. Make these moments easier by taking care of and planning out legal matters well ahead of time.

Standard wills and living wills can be discussed and created with an elder law attorney, and can make care decisions more concrete for you and your loved one. Establish powers of attorney for finance and healthcare decisions. In her article, Carol states that their clinic, hospital and doctors should have copies of your loved one's legal documents, especially those in regard to healthcare. Taking these measures can help to ensure they follow your loved one's wishes.

- **Purchase an emergency alert system.** If your aging loved one lives by themselves, if your loved one is prone to accidents or falls or you both just want the peace of mind in knowing help is just a button away, plan on purchasing an alarm or monitoring system. With emergency alert systems, seniors are able to request help if needed, no matter the circumstance.

Many emergency alert systems come as bracelets, necklaces or are clipped to the clothing, ensuring the system is well within reach. When loved ones fall, it's possible injuries can occur that will not allow them to reach the telephone, so emergency alert systems that are on their person could potentially save their life and secure help if you are not nearby or there to assist them.

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