

HomeTimes®

America's Choice In Home Care

Your resource for an at home senior lifestyle.



4 Ways Home Care Can Provide Summertime Relief

The summer months are perfect for backyard barbecues, trips to the beach, vacations, and other outdoor activities with family and friends. However, if you are caring for an older adult, you may sometimes feel your summertime plans need to be on the back burner.

You don't have to sacrifice your fun in the sun.

When to Hire Summer Home Care for Seniors

Visiting Angels' in-home caregivers can help you keep your summertime commitments while ensuring your senior loved one receives the care and companionship they need.

Here are a few reasons you may want to consider professional senior care from Visiting Angels during the summer:

1. You Are Going on Vacation

Summer excursions are fantastic opportunities to relax and recharge, but it's not always possible for an older adult to travel with you. If you are traveling out of town, Visiting Angels can provide compassionate and dedicated respite care for your loved one while you enjoy a worry-free vacation.

2. You Have Additional Childcare Responsibilities

When school dismisses for the summer, many parents find themselves chauffeuring children to camps, sports, summer

jobs, and friends' houses. These errands may mean fewer available hours to care for an older loved one. While Visiting Angels' caregivers do not provide childcare, they can extend the bandwidth you need to manage your personal childcare responsibilities.

3. Your Loved One Wants to Get Outside

Visiting Angels' caregivers can help seniors safely enjoy their favorite outdoor activities – whether taking a walk, planting vegetables in the garden, visiting the park, or simply sitting in the sun. Our caregivers can preserve your loved one's sense of independence by giving them the freedom to pursue their interests and hobbies while being on hand to assist when asked.

4. You Want to Keep Your Loved One Safe in the Summer Heat

As we age, our bodies aren't able to recognize or handle sweltering hot temperatures as well as when we were younger, placing older adults at a higher risk of developing heat-related illnesses. A Visiting Angels' caregiver can ensure your senior's home is at a safe temperature and help them remain hydrated and dressed appropriately for the weather.

If you need a Visiting Angels' caregiver for a vacation, short stint, or on an ongoing basis, our caregivers can accommodate your schedule and meet your loved one's needs. To learn more about how our caregivers can assist this summer and beyond, contact your Visiting Angels' local home care office to schedule a free in-home consultation.

How Do I Get Started With Visiting Angels?

If you are considering professional in-home personal care, a Visiting Angels' local home care agency will provide the information you need to make the right decision for your loved one. We offer no-cost, no-obligation home care assessments in the comfort of your loved one's home.

Contact your nearest Visiting Angels office today by calling 800-365-4189 to find out more.



Swallowing Disorders in Seniors

Have you witnessed a senior loved one struggling to eat or drink on a regular basis? Most of us take the basic function of swallowing for granted. But for some older adults, swallowing is not an easy process and can cause uncontrollable bouts of gagging or choking. “Dysphagia” may be the problem and can lead to significant health issues if not addressed.

What is Dysphagia?

Dysphagia is a condition that causes difficulties when swallowing food or liquids. This swallowing disorder causes coughing, choking, and sometimes aspiration of food particles or liquid into the lungs. Dysphagia can indicate a medical issue that may require treatment from a healthcare professional.

Dysphagia can happen to anyone at any age but is more likely to occur in older adults, especially those who experience health conditions such as:

- Multiple sclerosis (MS)
- Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS)
- Parkinson’s disease (PD)
- Stroke

Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) and growths in and around the esophagus can also affect swallowing.

Signs and Symptoms of Dysphagia

If an older adult occasionally experiences complications eating or swallowing, it is not necessarily a tell-tale sign of dysphagia. Symptoms of dysphagia may include:

- Taking a long time to eat or inability to finish a meal
- Drooling or “cheeking” of food instead of swallowing
- Frequent coughing, gagging, or choking while eating
- Loss of appetite
- Weight loss
- Dehydration
- Chest congestion
- Aspiration pneumonia

A physician will diagnose dysphagia through a physical examination and tests, including an x-ray, endoscopy, swallowing study, or other exams. The physician will provide a treatment plan that may include diet modification, therapy, or prescribed medications. Surgery may also be needed for severe cases of dysphagia.

In-Home Caregivers Can Help

A professional senior care provider can help your loved one feel more comfortable eating or drinking when you or other family members are unavailable.

In-home caregivers offer companionship and encouragement and can assist with:

- Monitoring for any choking/swallowing issues
- Shopping for the right foods
- Preparing nutritious meals following medical recommendations
- Ensuring prescribed medications that treat dysphagia are taken
- Reminders about therapy sessions
- Reporting back to the family

In addition to following a doctor’s advice, there are ways to cope with dysphagia and ensure your senior sticks to a diet plan:

Choose the Right Foods

Soft, smooth foods like pudding and yogurt are good choices. Also, you can mash or puree foods, including fruits and vegetables.

Encourage Slow Eating

Small bites, eating slowly, or eating small meals frequently can help with swallowing.

Skip the Straw

Straws allow liquids to enter the mouth quickly, increasing the chance of choking.

Avoid Ice Cream and Gelatin

Ice cream and gelatin melt in the mouth quickly and can increase the risk of aspiration.

With the average life expectancy age increasing, it doesn’t always mean older adults are living healthier. Many seniors have chronic health conditions, such as dysphagia, and require daily management and care. A professional caregiver can be instrumental in navigating your loved one’s home care and helping to improve their quality of life.

Take the next step by calling your local Visiting Angels’ home care office today to learn more about our personalized services, including the monitoring of swallowing and eating disorders.