



Exploring Retirement Living Guide



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Introduction

As an older adult, you may be at a stage in life where you, or perhaps even a loved one, may think a move to a retirement residence would be a beneficial lifestyle change; but how do you know if the time is right? It's natural to feel hesitant about embarking on a new chapter in life, as well as to have questions, if it is unfamiliar territory. You may be asking yourself a number of questions to gauge whether you're ready, like "Do I need more assistance with my personal routine?", "Can I reasonably still take care of my house or apartment, and do I even want to?" or "Would I prefer more opportunities to socialize?" Personal reflection and an understanding of what a retirement lifestyle can offer will both factor into your determination of readiness.

In this book, we'll help you to assess your personal situation and understand how a retirement lifestyle may help to improve your quality of life. Should you feel you're ready to begin exploring retirement living further, we'll also provide you with some helpful tips and advice that will educate your search for a retirement residence that suits your individual needs, preferences, and choices.



Understanding the benefits of **retirement living**

Many people associate retirement residences with personal support, and while assistance with things like your personal routine or medication administration are important services that help individuals maintain their independence and sense of security, there are many other programs and services offered in senior living communities that can positively impact your life. From delicious dining that can relieve you from grocery shopping and cooking your own meals each day, to activity calendars chock-full of programs, outings and social opportunities that can help keep you active and engaged in your community, to the peace of mind associated with being surrounded by friends and staff who are there if you need them, retirement living can help you lead a worry-free lifestyle so you can focus your energy on the things that are most important to you.



Why would I choose **retirement living** if I don't require care?

Delicious meals, housekeeping, transportation services, on-site activities, 24-hour security—there are so many benefits associated with retirement living beyond care support. It is by no means the only reason older adults choose the lifestyle. According to the Ontario Retirement Communities Association (ORCA), many older adults delay moving into a retirement residence until they start experiencing issues with completing everyday tasks—a reactive approach rather than a proactive one.

You don't have to wait for changes in your independence or a health incident before considering your options. Besides the potential health and wellness benefits that may come with receiving convenient retirement services, no one likes to make a move under worrisome circumstances. It's important to think about how you want to spend your energy going forward. For many, making a move before the need for personal support may actually help to improve or maintain their current state of health through proper diet, management of medication administration and social interaction. Rest assured, should your care needs change in the future, you'll also already be living in a place where they can be accommodated by staff you've come to know and trust.





CASE STUDY: MARY & DOUGLAS

Residents Mary* and Douglas* moved into their Chartwell retirement residence in 2014, along with their adorable bichon. Proud former owners of a local restaurant and bakery, they are now happy to have someone else doing the cooking for them! They chose to move into their residence because they were eager to live a worry-free retirement lifestyle where everything was taken care of for them, and are over the moon with their experience thus far. They explain they've made many new friends and particularly enjoy relaxing on the home's beautiful patio during the summer months.

*Names of residents have been changed in order to protect their privacy

Planning ahead

Even if you feel you are currently managing well on your own, and don't require any additional assistance with things like maintaining your home or carrying out daily tasks like cooking, cleaning or shopping, it never hurts to plan for the future. Waiting for changes in your current health or mobility shouldn't necessarily be the benchmark on which to base your readiness for retirement living, especially if you have a desire to relieve some of your daily responsibilities so you can spend your time on the things you enjoy most. Why not be proactive and begin exploring your options, or discuss your wishes for the future with your family? When you're in good health, you're better equipped to make an informed decision, as you've had the freedom to explore your options without the time pressure or urgency that may accompany a health incident.





CASE STUDY: PETER & ANNE

When Peter's* wife Anne* experienced a fall that resulted in a visit to the hospital, he knew the time was right to move into a retirement residence, where he could receive help and support for her daily needs. Sadly, two months after making the move, Anne passed away, and Peter chose to move back to his house, thinking he had no need to be there. But, as Peter—a self-described people-person—quickly discovered, he was too lonely living on his own. Changing his mind, he moved back to the retirement residence and chose an independent apartment for himself. Today, almost four years after Peter moved into his Chartwell home, he enjoys telling jokes, playing cards and dancing with his group of friends, and he's even become a resident ambassador who welcomes new arrivals.

*Names of residents have been changed in order to protect their privacy

Am I ready? **Survey**

Whether you've determined you're ready to move into a retirement residence, or you're still considering your options, it's important to assess your personal situation and determine what areas of daily life—if any—you may need some additional support with. Our "Am I Ready?" Survey can help you assess whether a senior living lifestyle may benefit you at this stage in your life and what level of accommodation is the best fit.

Visit **<https://chartwell.com/senior-living-resources/senior-living-options/am-i-ready>** to take the helpful survey.

Is it time? **Survey**

Watching a parent or loved one navigate the challenges of aging can be emotional and overwhelming. You may be asking yourself, "Are they still safe at home?" or "Would they be happier with more support and companionship?" Our "Is it Time?" Survey is a quick and confidential way to help you answer those questions. It's designed to guide families through common signs that a move to a retirement residence might be beneficial—offering clarity during a time that can feel uncertain.

Visit **<https://chartwell.com/senior-living-resources/senior-living-options/is-it-time>** to better understand your loved one's needs—and whether retirement living could be the right fit for them.



HOW DO I FIND THE RIGHT RESIDENCE FOR ME?

If you've determined the time is right, your next step is finding a retirement residence that not only fits your unique needs and preferences, but also feels like home. Whether you're researching online, engaging with friends and loved ones on referrals or recommendations, or asking the opinion of your family physician, here are some steps you can take that will help you narrow down your options:



GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

First determine what area you want to live in, whether that be the town you currently live in, somewhere near your children or other family members, or a place you've always wanted to live.



DETERMINE PERSONAL PRIORITIES

Before visiting retirement residences, it's good to have a general knowledge of what you want in terms of suite size (i.e. studio, one-bedroom, etc.) and recognize any support needs that you need addressed, as the lifestyle option you may need may not be offered at the home you're interested in. Also consider if there are any amenities, like outdoor space or an exercise room, or general services, like housekeeping or a dining program, that you would like to take advantage of.



SCHEDULE IN-PERSON VISITS

Once you've narrowed down your options after doing your research, begin to place calls and arrange for personalized tours of the residences you want to learn more about. This will give you a first-hand experience of what it's like to live there, and help you to determine if it feels right for you.



ASK FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

After your tour, reach out if you need more information or clarification of anything you learned so you can make an informed decision that you feel good about!

CAN I AFFORD RETIREMENT LIVING?

Understanding the financial aspects of retirement living is an important step in your decision-making journey. Chartwell's complimentary guide, "Affording Senior Living: A Guide to Financial Planning", offers practical advice, helpful tips, and expert insights to help you better plan and feel more confident about you or your loved one's retirement future.

Download the guide now and discover how retirement living can be more affordable than you may think.

<https://chartwell.com/senior-living-resources/retirement-finances/affording-senior-living-guide>



UNDERSTANDING YOUR OPTIONS

Retirement residences offer a number of living and support options that cater to a broad-range of needs and preferences. Whether you are an independent and active senior seeking convenient retirement services without the need for personal support, or could use some additional help with activities of daily living, there's an option out there that will fit your unique lifestyle.

Here's an explanation of some of the common lifestyle options you'll hear about:



SENIOR APARTMENTS

Our senior apartments are ideal for older adults who live independently and want to right-size their lifestyle. This option is popular among those looking to simplify their day-to-day, connect with like-minded peers, and enjoy peace of mind knowing that additional support may be available on the same campus if their needs change in the future.



INDEPENDENT LIVING

Independent living is the ideal lifestyle option for seniors looking for connection, convenience and access to support as needed. Benefit from delicious dining, housekeeping, staff available 24/7, and social and recreational programming - plus access to a range of care services depending on your province of residence.



ASSISTED LIVING

Many retirement residences are equipped with assisted living services or even dedicated floors, where seniors who require more help with their everyday routine can also benefit from specialized activities and programming, as well as amenity space such as a dining room and activity lounge designed with their needs in mind.



MEMORY CARE

Designed for seniors living with dementia, specially-trained staff provide dedicated programming, dining and service in a secure floor or neighbourhood to help residents lead a good day, every day.



RESPITE CARE

Whether you're recovering from an illness or surgery, need temporary support, or simply want to explore retirement living firsthand, our respite program is a flexible, reassuring option. Enjoy chef-prepared meals, engaging activities, and personalized care in a warm, welcoming setting.





CHOICE OF ACCOMMODATION

These days, retirement living comes in all shapes and sizes—from the number of bedrooms to the accommodation type itself! Here are some of the accommodation options offered at Chartwell homes across the country:



Retirement Residence Suites



Senior Apartments



Senior Townhouses

What should I look for when **taking a tour?**

After completing your research and narrowing down the list of homes that interest you, it's important to schedule an in-person tour to get a good feel for the home. Upon arrival, there are a number of things you can take notice of: for example, the upkeep and physical appearance of the residence, the surrounding environment, and if you get that “at home” feeling. How are staff interacting with residents and each other? Do current residents seem like they are enjoying themselves? Don't be afraid to stop and chat with a staff member besides your Retirement Living Consultant, or even a resident or family member, to hear their thoughts on living and working at the residence.



QUESTIONS TO ASK WHILE ON A TOUR OF A RETIREMENT RESIDENCE

While on a tour, it's important to ask questions that cannot be answered simply by looking around the residence in order to get a better feel for what living there is truly like. There can be a lot to see and absorb, so here are some questions that can help you assess whether the home meets your needs and desires:



WHAT LIVING AND SUPPORT OPTIONS ARE OFFERED HERE?

Explain your situation and see if they can accommodate your unique needs and preferences.



WHAT AMENITIES DO YOU HAVE HERE?

This is important if you have a specific hobby or interest you were hoping to explore once you move in, such as gardening or fitness.



DO YOU HAVE A SAMPLE ACTIVITY CALENDAR AND MENU I CAN SEE OR EXPERIENCE?

This will give you a snapshot of how residents spend their time, as well as what they eat—and don't be afraid to ask to stay for a meal to try the menu for yourself!



CAN YOU ACCOMMODATE CHANGING NEEDS?

It's important to understand if the residence offers the ability to add services so that you may not have to move if you end up needing additional help.

DOWNLOAD OUR ESSENTIAL TOUR CHECKLIST

To help you make the most of your visit, we've also created a simple, printable checklist that highlights key things to observe and questions to ask during your tour.

Click here to download the checklist and bring it with you for a more confident, informed experience.



Tips for making the transition easier

As with any change in life, downsizing from a house you love to make the move to a place with new people and experiences can cause concern and apprehension, but it's important to know that such feelings are natural and will subside once you are established and comfortable. Here are some tips that may make your transition smoother:

ESTABLISH A PLAN FOR DOWNSIZING

Determining what items and furniture to bring with you and what things to give away may seem intimidating at first, but it can make the moving process a lot simpler. Start by going through one room in your house at a time. Donate any unwanted items, and gift your family with any items they may be interested in that you can't accommodate in your new suite. Involving your family in the process can also help you spread the work.



INTRODUCE YOURSELF TO STAFF AND RESIDENTS

Getting to know some of your fellow residents and staff members will make you feel at home faster. Introduce yourself to staff or residents you may not have met yet, and if you want advice on where to sit at dinner or how to join an activity, ask a staff member you trust. They know who everyone is, and may be able to introduce you to someone who they know shares your interests or even sense of humour!



Tips for making the transition easier

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INVITE FRIENDS AND FAMILY TO VISIT

Another great way to help yourself feel comfortable is to welcome friends and family to your new home. Consider inviting them to join you for lunch or dinner in the dining room, or alternatively book your community's private dining room—should they have one—to host a celebration or event. If you're apprehensive about trying a new residence activity, why not consider asking a friend to join you to help break the ice?



GET INVOLVED IN ACTIVITIES

One of the best ways to meet new people is through the residence's programs, activities and outings. You may feel a desire to stay in your suite when you first move in, but challenge yourself to join a card tournament, movie night or trip out in the community and you may find you've found a new friend without even trying.



GIVE YOURSELF SIX MONTHS

For some individuals, it can take three to six months until they feel entirely settled and comfortable in their new home, so don't feel discouraged if it takes you time to adjust—this is natural and everyone goes through it, no matter how outgoing or shy they are. Before you know it, you'll be the one showing a new resident around the home!





READY TO EXPLORE YOUR RETIREMENT LIVING OPTIONS WITH CHARTWELL?

If you feel the time is right for retirement living, and you'd like to begin exploring what Chartwell retirement residences are available in the geographic area of your choice, visit **<https://chartwell.com/find-a-residence>** or **call us at 1-855-461-0685** to find the home nearest you. From there you can reach out for any additional information you may require and schedule a personalized tour and complimentary meal, where you will experience what it's like to live there firsthand.



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September 2025