

# Understanding Long-Term Care

## Introduction

Living into your early 70's used to be common; now increasingly more people are living into their 80's and 90's. Improved medical care combined with better nutrition and a more active lifestyle tend to result in longer and healthier lives.

While it is encouraging, an extended life brings with it the increased likelihood of experiencing a long-term illness. To effectively preserve our dignity and freedom of choice tomorrow means carefully considering our options today.

Diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease, actor Michael J. Fox and boxing legend Muhammad Ali remind us that life altering events can occur at any age. In the end, how well you protect your assets could have much to do with the future happiness and material security of your family.

## What is long-term care?

Long-term care refers to a broad range of services available to individuals who have lost some level of independence and need help with daily activities that most healthy people take for granted. This necessary assistance is often the result of a chronic illness – one in which modern medical science has developed treatments but no cures. Arthritis and Alzheimer's disease are two common chronic illnesses.

## How is Long-Term Care Different from other Medical Care?

Rehabilitative medical care due to acute conditions is different from long-term care. When medical care is the result of an acute, or short term, medical condition (e.g. hip replacements, strokes, or cancer), a hospital stay is often necessary to help stabilize the condition. If patients have not made a full recovery, they are normally discharged to the care of a nursing facility, or to the supervision of professional home care. With these types of conditions, Medicare (for qualifying individuals) or private-pay health insurance will usually pay for rehabilitative care.

## When will someone need care?

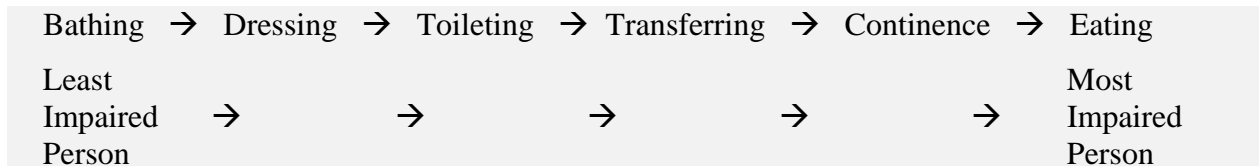
There is no single way to identify when or if someone will need long-term care. Every case is different due to the type of illness or injury, who can provide the necessary care, and the financial resources available.

Understanding the types of illnesses and injuries that create the need for long-term care is important. A chronically ill individual generally has either a *physical* or a *cognitive impairment*.

### **Physical Impairment**

Activities of daily living (ADLs) are the most common measurement for physical ability. Most of us take these activities for granted.

The ADLs requiring assistance typically occur in a specific order as depicted in the continuum model below:



When assistance is needed with ADLs, some individuals may simply require that a health care practitioner remain within arm's reach to ensure that the activity completed safely. This is referred to as standby assistance. As the care recipient's needs increase, someone may be needed to physically assist with completing the required activity. This is referred to as hands on assistance.

### **Cognitive Impairment**

When a cognitive impairment exists, individuals are frequently able to complete the physical activities but may not remember how or when to complete them. This level of impairment is usually segmented into three categories:

- Short or long-term memory,
- Orientation as to person, place or time, and
- Deductive or abstract reasoning. This situation tends to require intervention by a third party to ensure that the activities are completed safely.

Common examples of a cognitive impairment are Alzheimer's disease, senility, or dementia.

### **What Can I Do To Protect Against a Long-Term Care Need?**

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle and receiving annual check-up at your doctor's office are effective ways of minimizing that risk. However, even these steps can not eliminate a long-term care event from happening to otherwise healthy people, or prevent the normal effects of aging. By working with a knowledgeable and trusted agent, you can learn how long-term care insurance may help protect you against the costs of long-term care. Today's long-term care insurance policies offers freedom of choice when it's needed most -- and at a fraction of the cost which might be incurred by paying out-of-pocket.