

# MOVING TO THE NEXT PHASE



By Keely Stockett

*It's no secret that baby boomers are officially earning dual status as senior citizens. For the next 18 years, Americans will be hitting 65 at a rate of about 8,000 per day. But as boomers rumble toward retirement, they aren't replacing previous generations—they're joining them. Currently, sociologists say the senior demographic spans three generations: "Leading-Edge Boomers," who are turning 65; "The Silent Generation," aged 67 to 85; and "The Greatest Generation," aged 85 and older.*

*A growing senior living industry meets housing and healthcare needs through new and expanding options.*

So now, there are three separate market segments, where there previously was one. As a result, the demands of this rapidly expanding senior population are more diverse than ever, particularly when it comes to long-term care and senior housing. And the industry has responded: as the 65-plus generation has ballooned, so too have their options.

That's good news if you're considering a senior living facility or community. Given the inherent uncertainties of the aging process, deciding where to spend your golden years can be a challenge. But more choices mean the odds of finding a perfect fit are in your favor.

## Understanding Your Options

Today's senior living models range from 24/7 care to completely self-sufficient living.

Seniors who are able to care for themselves may want to consider **independent living communities**. Residents typically pay a rental rate or monthly fee, and services such as housekeeping, laundry, meals and some level of healthcare are typically provided. Seniors who choose independent living often have the opportunity to participate in recreational, educational and social activities with fellow residents.

**Assisted living facilities** provide more personalized services for seniors who need support on a regular basis, but not necessarily around the clock. Skilled nursing facilities—more commonly called nursing homes—offer the highest level of care for seniors outside of a hospital, with constant assistance and medical attention for those who can no longer care for themselves.

**Continuing-care retirement communities (CCRCs)** include independent living, assisted living and skilled nursing facilities on a single campus, allowing residents to move from one level of care to the next while staying in the same general location. Seniors often require additional support as they age and the tiered structure of CCRCs can ease those transitions.

**Home care services** are an option for seniors who need regular assistance but prefer to stay in their homes. **Special care units (SCUs)** may be the best fit for seniors who suffer from Alzheimer's disease or other types of dementia, as they provide customized support that meets the unique mental and physical healthcare requirements of these individuals.

## New Models for an Active Generation

As the senior demographic has changed, so too have senior housing preferences. More Americans now prefer community-based residential concepts that offer a neighborhood-like feel, as opposed to the institutional, medical-based model that was prevalent in the mid-twentieth century. Largely driven by Leading-Edge Boomers and their desire to maintain active, healthy, and social lifestyles, this trend has resulted in an explosion of innovative residential concepts over the past few decades.

Growing demand for CCRCs reflects that evolution. As of 2012, there were 1,979 CCRCs nationwide. Experts expect that number to rise as the housing market recovers and the senior population increases. Why? CCRCs offer a sense of

## EXPERT ADVICE

### Housing Needs of Boomers

“One size will not fit all when it comes to housing for the boomers. They are looking for luxury, convenience, and a community suited to an active lifestyle where they can enjoy social activities and spend time with their families and friends. They also want the comforts of home. Choosing between senior housing options will be one of the most important decisions boomers will make in the course of their lives. They are at an advantage when it comes to looking, with a wealth of knowledge and unlimited resources at their fingertips.”



Teresa Bryant,  
Executive Director,  
Morning Pointe  
of Hixson

EXPERT ADVICE

Making an Informed Decision

“ I tell every family I meet with to do research on the different types of senior housing available, along with having a discussion with their primary physician about what he or she recommends. I also encourage families to tour, not only our community, but others as well. I believe when you walk into a community you should have a feeling of being at home.”



Abby Lockerby, Community Relations Director Elmcroft of Shallowford

permanence and peace of mind: residents can establish relationships and settle into the community, knowing that they will remain in the same location even as their needs change.

Also gaining popularity is the “villages” concept. Operated as non-profit organizations, villages bring programs and services to seniors, allowing them to age safely and healthily in their own homes and neighborhoods. Since it was pioneered in 2001, the model has expanded across the country, with 50 villages in the U.S. and another 100 in development.

Making an Informed Decision

Choosing a senior living option comes down to asking the right questions: “What do I want?” “What do I need?” “What can I afford?”



Generally, an **honest assessment of your personal health** is a good place to start. The level of care you require should be at the forefront of your decision, and it may dictate the model that’s best for you. Can you perform everyday activities, like dressing or bathing? Do you need regular medical oversight? Consider seeking input from a physician who is familiar with your healthcare history.

Your **financial circumstances** also may be a determining factor. Costs of senior care facilities vary, so before you start looking, know what you can afford. Here, too, professional advice can be invaluable. Consult a trusted financial advisor to ensure you have a firm grasp on your budget. You may be entitled to financial assistance: Medicare generally does not pay for long-term care, but in some cases, Medicaid does. Long-term care insurance can also offset some costs. When you start looking into specific facilities, be sure to get details on prices and fees.

While your healthcare and financial requirements can’t be ignored, neither should your happiness. Don’t neglect **emotional and social needs** as you enter this phase of life. Are you looking for community interaction? Do you crave structure, or do you prefer the freedom

to set your own schedule? Is a single room more appealing? Reflect on personal preferences, and be aware of the lifestyle you wish to maintain.

Other important considerations include **location**—do you want to be close to family and friends?—as well as **first impressions**. Be sure to take a tour and meet the staff before signing on the dotted line. It’s also a good idea to ask about a facility’s “philosophy of care” so that you understand the care goals and culture of your potential residence.

Deciding where to go next is a process, but it doesn’t have to be a daunting one. Involving loved ones, trusted advisors, doctors or clergy can help you feel confident in the choice you make. Starting early, when the need isn’t immediate, also can relieve some stress. Take advantage of public information and tools: use online self-assessments, read facility reviews and talk to people who can give you straight facts.

Most importantly, know that you’re not alone: more Americans than ever before are facing the same decision. Fortunately, long-term care options and resources have grown in tandem with our nation’s senior population. As you approach the next phase of your life, you can find a home that provides exactly what you need—and make your transition not only smoother, but more enjoyable.

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# Get Moving with Joint Replacement

By Julia Wilhelm, Life Care Public Relations

**I**magine a life with limited mobility. A walk in the park with friends is a hassle. Walking up or down the stairs in your home or office is painful. Exercise that is needed for optimal health is impossible.

As we age, mobility becomes increasingly important, but for many living with joint pain, mobility also becomes increasingly painful. Joint replacement can be a helpful solution to alleviate joint pain. Decades of research and improvement has shown that joint replacement is reliable and can lead to pain-free movement.

## What is joint replacement?

Joint replacement can be described like changing a tire. Certain parts of the body wear down over time, and, like tires, need to be replaced.

Joint replacement surgery is typically an elective procedure done to replace cartilage that has worn down between bones. Without cartilage present to cushion the joint, pain results.

The most common joints replaced by surgery are the hip and knee. Most individuals undergo joint replacement, or multiple replacements, later in life. This is because joint replacement is not recommended for young individuals due to the limited lifespan of the prosthetic joint.

Joint replacement surgery can also be used to alleviate pain from extensive arthritis. While



joint replacement procedures are typically elective, a hip replacement may be performed due to trauma such as a fracture.

## What is joint replacement surgery like?

In place of the natural bone, a prosthetic joint is inserted during surgery. The prosthesis is often made of plastic, metal or a combination of the two. Cement is added to hold the new joint in place while natural bone attaches to the joint. This can allow for immediate walking ability after surgery, with assistance, as opposed to extended healing time.

Prosthetic joints have been improving for decades, both in structure and durability. Many experts claim prosthetic joints can last up to 20 years in healthy patients. The surgical techniques have also become less invasive.

## How do you prepare for surgery?

Preparation is key in making joint replacement easy. Joint replacement patients begin the surgical process with a conversation with their orthopedic surgeon. The patient is given information about the entire joint replacement process, from hospital admission to follow-up appointments.

Having a healthy weight, cardiovascular system and muscle system is ideal in beginning the process of joint replacement. Patients should ask their doctors for safe pre-surgery exercise tips to increase muscle strength and aid in recovery.

As with any medical procedure, there are risks to having joint replacement surgery. The most severe risks are long-term, such as a wearing down of the replaced joint over time or due to stress. Other risks include infection or loosening and dislocation of the prosthesis. The risks with joint replacement surgery are generally low because of new technology and research.

## What happens after surgery?

After joint replacement surgery, patients are either sent to a rehabilitation facility or home with prescribed physical therapy in most circumstances. Patients should consult with their doctor after surgery to determine the best time to return to normal activities. As a team, the patient, doctors and therapists can create an individualized plan to help the patient return to his or her normal activities.

Therapy will begin with an evaluation to determine the patient's individual needs and abilities. The rehab goal after joint replacement surgery is to regain strength and mobility. Patients must learn how to move and carry out daily activities in a way that will not place stress on the prosthetic joint, as well as strengthen muscles that were weakened by disuse.

Typically, a combination of physical and occupational therapy techniques help patients adjust to the prosthesis. Duration and types of therapy vary by individual.

Patients are encouraged to involve family members and friends throughout the recovery and rehab. The support will help the process seem less daunting for the patient and will help the family understand more.

## Is joint replacement right for me?

If severe joint pain is limiting your mobility or decreasing your quality of life, it's time to talk to your doctor about your joint replacement options. Ideally, a good joint replacement candidate would be 50 years of age or older and in generally good cardiovascular and muscular health. Pain should not limit your abilities to enjoy simple things like enjoying a walk outdoors or keeping up with friends and family. Joint replacement can make life enjoyable once again.

Life Care Centers of America 