

Adult Day Care Services

Finding the Best Center for Your Needs



Adult day care services are designed for older adults who require supervised care during the day, or those who are isolated and lonely. Adult day care centers enable seniors to socialize and enjoy planned activities in a group setting, while still receiving needed health services. At the same time, they offer family caregivers respite from caregiving duties while knowing that their loved one is in a safe place. Whether you're looking at day care services for yourself or an older adult you're caring for, these tips can help you find the center that best fits your needs.

What is adult day care?

Adult day care is a planned program of activities in a professional care setting designed to promote well-being through social and health-related services. Adult day care centers offer a safe, supportive, and cheerful environment where older adults can participate in social activities.

Services vary between facilities, including the level of care offered. While one type of center focuses mainly on social and recreation services, with a few health-related and personal care services, another type will provide more comprehensive medical and therapeutic services. These could include physical, occupational, or speech therapy, for example, or medical services administered by a registered nurse or other health professional. Finally, a third type of facility will offer specialized services for adults with a specific health condition, such as dementia or a disability.

Adult day care centers tend to operate during daytime hours, Monday through Friday, although some services may be available in the evenings or at weekends. Whatever the range of services, the intent is primarily two-fold:

- To provide older adults an opportunity to get out of the house and receive both mental

and social stimulation, as well as the continuing care they need.

- To give caregivers a much-needed break in which to work, attend to personal needs, or simply to rest and relax.

Services provided by adult day care centers

A well-run adult day care center's goals will focus on enriching participants' lives, building upon their skills and strengths, and providing lots of social interaction. Each facility differs in terms of features, but services may include:

Social activities. Planned activities tend to be tailored to the participants' abilities and health conditions, but may encompass such things as arts and crafts, musical entertainment and sing-a-longs, mental stimulation games such as bingo, stretching or other gentle exercise, discussion groups (for books, films, or current events, for example), holiday and birthday celebrations, and local outings.

Nutrition. Day care centers provide seniors with nutritious meals, including those that accommodate special diets, along with snacks.

Personal care. Center staff can help with the activities of daily living such as grooming, toilet hygiene, walking, and feeding.

Health services. These may vary from medication dispensing, blood pressure monitoring, hearing checks, and vision screening, for example, to symptom management and more intensive medical or therapeutic services.

Transportation. Some adult day care centers provide transportation to and from the center and for any local outings.

Services for caregivers. Some centers may provide counseling, support groups for caregivers, help for care planning, and caregiving education.

Some centers even offer pet therapy or programs that include children. The Friendship Center in California, for example, developed The GOLD Project where older adults are encouraged to visit local classrooms and share their life experiences with the children, educating and enlivening both groups in the process.

Staffing of adult day care centers

Though each adult day care center is staffed according to the needs of its participants, most programs operate with:

- Activity staff, usually an activity director and assistants
- Program assistants who aid with personal care
- A social worker
- A registered nurse or licensed practical nurse
- A center director

Centers that serve a large number of participants may also employ a driver, secretary, and accountant

Source: *National Adult Day Services Association (NADSA)*

Benefits of adult day care

Almost Family, an adult day care center provider in the U.S. and Canada, summarizes the benefits of adult day care well: “Adult day care offers a win/win situation for everyone in the family—not only the client or member who attends the program, but also for the family member who has primary responsibility as caregiver. Adult day care provides a much-needed respite for the caregiver, affording a break from the physical demands and stress of providing round-the-clock care.”

Benefits for the older adult

For the participant, an adult day care center’s benefits can be extensive.

- Adult day care provides a safe, secure environment in which to spend the day or part of the day.
- Offers enjoyable and educational activities.
- Appropriate [physical exercise](#) can help to reduce falls.
- Meaningful social interaction can improve both mental and physical health and help to [prevent or delay cognitive decline](#).
- Mental and social stimulation during the day can [improve the quality of your sleep](#) at night.
- Participation in adult day care activities may even enhance or maintain your level of independence, keeping you living at home longer by relieving caregiver fatigue and delaying your escalation of dependence.
- Having control over activities you partake in can bolster your self-esteem.
- Adult day care offers the chance to [build new friendships](#) and enjoy peer support.

Benefits for the caregiver

Seeking support and maintaining your own health are key to managing [your role as a](#)

[caregiver](#), so it's not selfish to use the services of an adult day care center to give you some time to yourself. If you're overwhelmed by the daily grind of caregiving, your patience and compassion will wear thin, you'll find it harder to connect with the person you're caring for, and you'll probably both feel unfulfilled.

- Taking regular breaks from the demands of caregiving can reduce your stress levels and help you to [avoid burnout](#).
- Being able to recharge your batteries can leave you feeling more energetic, focused, and reinvigorated about your caregiving role.
- Using an adult day care facility can enable you to continue working, attend school, or devote more time to other family members.
- Can give you peace of mind that your loved one isn't home alone but is in a supervised and safe environment.

Is an adult day care center right for you?

As a senior, it can be challenging to admit that you're lonely or need help, especially if you've been a highly independent person used to caring for others all your life. But it's important to remember that most of us over the age of 65 will require some type of long-term care services. There's nothing to be ashamed about in admitting you need more help than you used to. After all, we've all had to rely on others at some point during our adult lives, be it for help at work or home, for professional services, or simply for moral support. For many of us, independence is recognizing when it's time to ask for help.

Similarly, if you're the caregiver, it may be difficult to consider allowing "strangers" to care for your beloved family member. But even if you know that you're the best possible person to care for your loved one, that's no reason not to seek adult day care services. Taking time off is vital to your health and well-being and having time apart can help refresh and rejuvenate any relationship.

When to consider adult day care

As with any service, the best time to start exploring what's available is before you actually need it. You may want to consider using adult day care when a senior:

- Can no longer structure their own daily activities.
- Is isolated and desires companionship.
- Can't be safely left alone at home.
- Lives with someone who works outside the home or who is frequently away from home for other reasons.

Good candidates for adult day care centers are seniors who .

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- Can benefit from the friendship and functional assistance a day care center offers.
- May be physically or cognitively challenged but do not require 24-hour supervision.
- Are in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease.
- Are mobile, with the possible assistance of a cane, walker, or wheelchair.
- Are continent (in most cases).

Choosing the right adult day care center

The National Adult Day Services Association (NADSA) recommends you start by asking yourself what specific services both the senior adult and the caregiver need most.

For the day care participant, are social activities primary? Assistance with walking, eating or medications? Mental stimulation? Exercise?

As a caregiver, is support what you need most? Some free time? Help with transportation?

Answering these questions will help you determine which of the three main types of adult day care centers (social, health-focused, and dementia or disability-oriented) will best serve you.

Questions to ask an adult day care center provider

When you contact the adult day care centers you've chosen to consider, ask questions such as the following:

1. Who owns or sponsors the adult day care center? How long has it been operating? Is it licensed or certified? (If required in your country or state)
2. What are the days and hours of operation?
3. Which conditions are accepted (e.g., memory loss, limited mobility, incontinence)?
4. What is the ratio of staff to participants? How are care providers screened? What is the training and level of experience of the care providers? How, and by whom, are the care providers supervised?
5. What procedures does the program have for emergencies?
6. What activities are offered? Are there a variety of individual and group programs?
7. Is transportation to and from the adult day care center provided?
8. Are meals and snacks included? Are special diets accommodated?
9. What is the cost of services? How is payment arranged?

Visiting an adult day care center

When you have identified potential adult day care centers, plan to visit at least three so that you can get a “feel” for the people and the environments. Observe the staff and how they interact with care participants. Try to picture yourself or your loved one there and ask plenty of questions. You may wish to try out different adult day care centers a few times each to see whether your experience on different days confirms your initial impressions. Be sure to bring the following site visit checklist with you each time:

Adult day care center site visit checklist:

- Did you feel welcome?
- Were the center services and activities properly explained?
- Were you given information regarding staffing, programming, and costs?
- Is the facility clean, pleasant, and free of odor?
- Is the building and site wheelchair accessible?
- Is the furniture sturdy and comfortable?
- Are there loungers and chairs with arms for relaxation?
- Is there a quiet place in the center?
- Did the staff and participants seem cheerful and comfortable?
- Are participants involved in planning activities?

Source: *National Adult Day Services Association (NADSA)*

Where to turn for help

To find an adult day care center in the U.S.: Search [caregiving resources](#), use the [Eldercare Locator](#), or call the helpline at 1-800-677-1116. (Administration on Aging)

In the UK: [Find out about day care centres](#) or call the Carers Direct Helpline on 0808 802 0202 for free information and advice. (NHS)

In Australia: Search [My Aged Care](#) or contact your local Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre at 1800 200 422 for information on senior support services including adult day care centers. (Australian Government)

In Canada: Find [Programs and Services for Seniors](#), including adult day care options, or call 1-800-622-6232. (Government of Canada)

Recommended reading

[Choosing a Center](#) - 7 steps for choosing the right adult day care. (National Adult Day Services Association)

[Adult day service: What you need to know](#) - Includes the benefits of adult day care. (Mayo Clinic)

[A Key to Choice for Seniors](#) (PDF) - Guide to assessing lifestyle needs and evaluating services available to seniors, including adult day care. (The Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging)

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