

## Meet Jennifer Richey



### When Jennifer's father was diagnosed with kidney failure in 2023, her world shifted overnight.

Suddenly, she was not only a daughter but also a caregiver, a health advocate, and a mother of two young children, all while continuing her career as a Human Resources Manager at Magna Electronics in Holly, MI.

Like so many in the “**sandwich generation**,” adults who care for both their aging parents and their own children, often while juggling careers, Jennifer was stretched thin. Her days were filled with work, parenting, and her father’s medical needs. Her nights brought little rest, as fatigue, brain fog, and inflammation made even getting out of bed a challenge.

**“I realized I was caring for everyone else but not myself.**

Managing your health can be challenging when you are pulled in many directions as a caregiver, but Jennifer viewed it as an opportunity to avoid losing herself. She began incorporating small acts of self-care into her demanding routine: grief counseling sessions via telehealth during

her commutes, turning the effort of pushing her father’s wheelchair into exercise, waking up earlier to enjoy a quiet moment with a book, leaning on her partner when needed, and journaling her racing thoughts each night. These intentional steps helped her reclaim balance and reminded her to care for her own physical and mental health.

After losing her father earlier this year, Jennifer realized that health is fragile and time does not wait. Aging does not happen “later”; it is happening now, and every choice we make today shapes the quality of life we will have tomorrow. She could not slow down the clock or change her genetics, so she began listening to her body, navigating perimenopause, and educating herself on what healthy aging truly means.

With her two young children in mind, Jennifer is committed to staying healthy for as long as possible to ensure they are not left as part of the sandwich generation or without their parents.

Her renewed focus on health also sparked a deeper awareness of aging in place, the idea of preparing your home, body, and lifestyle to support independence and quality of life as you grow older. With her partner, she has

made intentional choices to age comfortably in her own home by staying active, capable, and connected to her community.

Jennifer now lives in a one-level home with an accessible entrance, embraces low-impact sports like golf, and prioritizes her physical and mental well-being as a daily commitment. She views these actions not just as self-care, but as investments in aging in place, ensuring she can continue living life on her own terms for years to come.

**“We cannot control our destiny, but we can make choices to prepare for it.**

Jennifer’s story is not just about caregiving; it is about resilience, advocacy and the importance of planning. Her journey shows that healthy aging and aging in place start long before retirement. It means making those small, intentional choices that protect our independence and well-being. By prioritizing our health, and creating a safe and accessible day to day, we can prepare today for the life we want tomorrow. Keep reading to learn more!



Answers Good for you,  
Wellness, Magna, Healthy,  
Fitness, Brain

## Brain Game Word Scramble

**Train your brain:**  
Unscramble the words and write your answer in each box. This is an excellent game for boosting word recall and focus!

- 1 ODOG ROF UYO
- 2 SLSENLWE
- 3 ANMAG
- 4 YTHLEHA
- 5 SSENTIF
- 6 NIBAR


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# What Does Aging in Place Really Mean?

## Why Consider Aging in Place:

### Body and Mind:

Familiar spaces reduce stress and confusion, especially for those with memory challenges. Routines like daily walks or chatting with neighbours help keep you steady and calm.

### Connection:

Familiar neighbours, local shops, and nearby parks foster belonging. These connections are meaningful for health, boosting confidence and joy.

### Independence:

You remain in control of how you spend your day, what you eat, and how you live. Independence does not mean doing everything alone; it means making your own choices, even with support.

### Finances:

Living in your own home is often more affordable than paying for assisted living facilities or nursing home care.



Images by Freepik



Planning for healthy aging starts today. Make choices now that keep you in control of your life later.

### Brain Game

### Memory Test

Read the following list for 30 seconds, then cover it and write down as many as you can remember. This is an excellent game for strengthening short-term memory and attention.

Apple	Book
River	Mountain
Chair	Dog
Blue	Car
Coffee	Music



## Aging in place is not just for “later” – it is something to think about now.

Home is more than four walls; it is where life happens, where routines feel familiar, and where memories are made. For many of us in our 30s, 40s, and 50s, planning ahead means creating spaces that work for today and tomorrow. Whether for ourselves or for the parents we love. Aging in place is not about resisting change; it is about making smart choices so life stays safe, independent, and comfortable for as long as possible. Because the best home is one that grows with you.

## Myths vs. Realities:

### Myth 1:

Aging in place is only for older adults.

### Reality:

Anyone can plan for it, whether recovering from injury, living with a disability, or preparing for the future.

### Myth 2:

Aging in place means being isolated.

### Reality:

With planning, you can stay connected to friends, family, and community while getting the support you need.

### Myth 3:

Memory loss is unavoidable.

### Reality:

Some changes to memory are normal, but a severe decline as you age is not guaranteed. You can keep learning and growing throughout life to slow the process of memory loss.

## Four Strategies to Aging in Place:

1

### Safe Housing

Add handrails, improve lighting, remove trip hazards, and ensure step-free entrances.

2

### Mobility

Rearrange furniture for easy movement, exercise regularly, and live in walkable neighbourhoods with reliable transportation.

3

### Community

Stay socially connected through friends, neighbours, and local events.

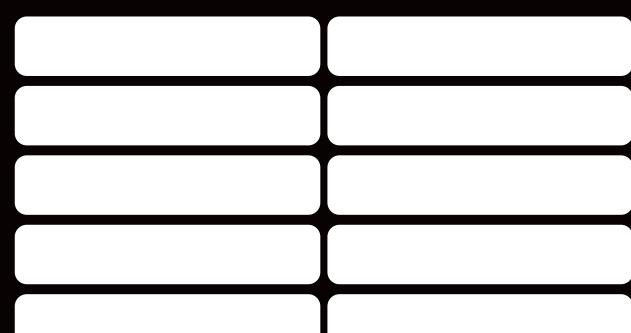
4

### Proactive Health

Focus on preventative care, good nutrition, and prioritize your mental health. Utilize services such as telehealth, in-home caregivers, and visiting nurses as needed.

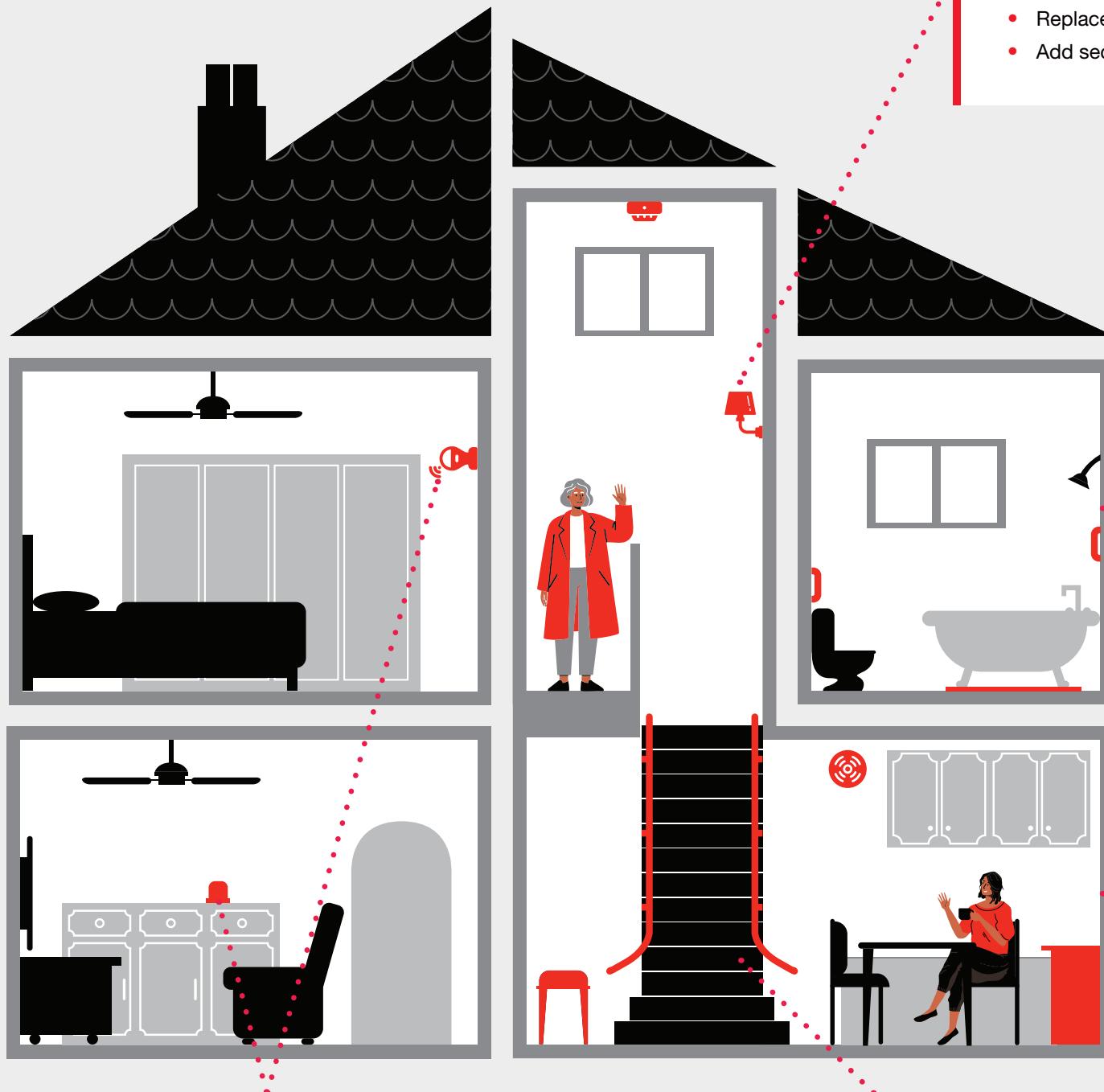
## The Bottom Line

Aging in place is possible when your home is safe, your health is supported, and your community is close. This experience becomes a joyful, independent way to grow older in the place you love most: **Your home.**



# Simple Home Adaptations to Support Aging in Place

Life changes, and so do our homes. Whether you are planning for your own future or supporting aging parents, a few thoughtful updates can make everyday living safer, more comfortable, and ready for the years ahead. Here are practical ways to create a home that works for everyone—today and tomorrow.



## General Safety:

- Keep walkways free of trip hazards like clutter, furniture, cords, and rugs.
- Ensure rooms are well-lit; replace bulbs as needed.
- Check smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms.
- Repair broken fixtures or flooring.
- Consider safer flooring like hardwood or vinyl.
- Replace round doorknobs with lever handles.
- Add secure locks to windows and doors.

## Bathroom Adjustments:

- Install grab bars near the toilet, tub, and shower.
- Use non-slip mats or strips in wet areas.
- Add a shower stool and/or handheld showerhead.
- Install motion-sensor night lights in hallways and bathrooms.

## Kitchen Modifications:

- Consider automatic shut-off switches for stoves.
- Use drawer-style dishwashers for easier access.
- Explore induction cooktops to reduce burn risk.
- Widen entrances for walkers or wheelchairs.

## Technology Supports:

- **Motion-sensor lights:** Light up dark areas to prevent accidents.
- **Smart home devices:** Control lights, locks, appliances, and thermostats remotely.
- **Medical alert systems:** Consider wearable devices that notify emergency contacts if a fall or emergency occurs.

## Stairs and Entryways:

- Add handrails to both sides of the stairs.
- Consider ramps or gates at entryways if stairs are challenging.
- Ensure outdoor paths and entrances are level and hazard-free.
- Use textured outdoor surfaces to prevent slips and trips.
- Keep a small bench or table near the door for convenience.

## Looking Ahead

Thoughtful adaptations can make your home a safe, comfortable, and empowering space, which can help you stay independent and confident at every stage of life. Consider reaching out to an Occupational Therapist, or your loved ones, to assist you with your home modifications.

## Mental Health Corner

### The Emotional Side of Caregiving

Caring for an aging parent while juggling work, family, and personal responsibilities can be deeply meaningful, but it can also be emotionally exhausting. Many adults find themselves balancing their role as a parent with the growing needs of their own parents, creating what is often called the “sandwich generation.” This dual caregiving role can lead to stress, guilt, and burnout if support and boundaries are not in place. It is common to feel pulled in multiple directions. From worrying about a parent’s health, to managing appointments, and still trying to show up for your children, your partner and yourself. Over time, this constant pressure can impact sleep, mood, and overall well-being. Acknowledging these feelings is not a sign of weakness; it is a normal response to a demanding role.

Protecting your mental health starts with small, intentional steps. Set realistic expectations, ask for help when you need it, and share responsibilities among family members when possible. Building a routine that includes breaks, movement, and social connection can help maintain balance. Connecting with caregiver support groups can also reduce feelings of isolation. Remember, caring for yourself does not take away from the care you provide. When you protect your mental health, you are better equipped to support the people who depend on you.



# Top 5 Ways

## to Support Our Loved Ones, and Ourselves, to Age Independently

### Keep Moving

**For your loved ones:** Gentle stretches, short walks, and light strength exercises (like resistance bands) help loosen joints, reduce pain, and maintain balance.

**For yourself:** Staying active daily supports your own mobility and reduces the risk of falls.

1

### Eat Well

**For your loved ones:** Plan weekly meals together, prep meals in advance, and keep hydration handy with an easy-grip water bottle.

**For yourself:** Prioritize a balanced diet with protein, calcium, and fibre to support muscle, bone, and digestive health.

2

### Stay Sharp

**For your loved ones:** Try playing word games, listening to audiobooks, or engaging in new learning activities to keep their mind engaged.

**For yourself:** Take on a new hobby or challenge to maintain cognitive health.

3

### Stay Connected

**For your loved ones:** Schedule calls with friends and plan visits to community activities, such as tai chi or art classes.

**For yourself:** Prioritize social time through chats with friends or local group activities to stay fulfilled and supported.

4

### Find Purpose

**For your loved ones:** Encourage daily tasks, such as gardening or cooking together, to keep the mind and body engaged.

**For yourself:** Identify meaningful routines, such as caring for family, pets, or pursuing hobbies, that bring purpose and joy to your daily life.

5

→ Taking simple steps in these five areas benefits both seniors and caregivers. Building these routines into daily life helps our loved ones stay independent while setting ourselves up for a healthier, more engaged future.

## Spinach Salad with Chicken, Avocado, and Goat Cheese

This nutrient-packed salad balances lean protein, healthy fats, fibre, and antioxidants. With brain-friendly ingredients like spinach, avocado, and olive oil, it supports cognitive health while providing lasting energy. At just under 350 calories per serving, it is light yet satisfying.

### Nutritional Facts

(Per Serving)

348kcal Calories

22.9 g Protein

24 g Total Fat

13.6 g Carbs

6.1 g Fibre

### Ingredients

#### Dressing:

3 tbsp white wine vinegar

2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil

1 tbsp Dijon mustard

Serves: 4 Total Time: 15 min

#### Salad:

1/4 cup pine nuts (or your choice of salt-free nut/seed)

8 cups chopped spinach

1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved

1 1/2 cups cooked chicken, chopped

1 (large) avocado, peeled, pitted, and sliced

1/2 cup corn kernels

1/3 cup crumbled goat cheese

### Directions

- Cook the chicken:** Season and pan-sear the chicken until golden and cooked through, then chop.
- Toast the pine nuts (or chosen alternative):** Heat in a dry skillet until fragrant, then set aside.
- Assemble the salad:** In a large bowl, combine spinach, tomatoes, chicken, avocado, corn, goat cheese, and pine nuts.
- Make and add dressing:** Whisk together the vinegar, olive oil, and Dijon mustard, season with salt and pepper, then drizzle over salad and toss gently.
- Serve and enjoy!**

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We would love to hear from you!

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