

Addressing Caregiving and Senior Social Isolation – Philips Cares®

Older adults are often alone. Much has been written about the issue [of loneliness, social isolation and older adults](#) – especially in recent years, where [studies have shown a](#) correlation with [poorer health outcomes](#). The demographics of older adults contribute to these reasons for concern. Consider the following:

- **Older people:** [Seventy percent of older people living alone are women](#). While it is not necessarily true that living alone makes a person lonely, if not addressed, it can contribute. Of the population of women aged 75+, 46% live alone. Untreated hearing loss can [contribute to social isolation](#) – and worse health outcomes.
- **Feelings of loneliness:** Sixty percent of those [75+ report feelings of loneliness](#). This could be related to long-distance isolation from family – seniors may have retired and moved to Florida for the weather, but their family members remained behind, committed to jobs and raising children.
- **Worsening health status and low income:** As seniors age and become frail they may feel even more isolated without family nearby. And if they are lower income, [as with many women](#), the odds of being lonely are greater – According to AARP Foundation, half of [lower income adult individuals](#) are lonely.

Many aging adults provide and receive unpaid care at home. There are more than 50 million [people aged 65+ in the US today](#). Consider that of that number, only [3% of older adults live in nursing homes](#) and upwards of [1 million live in senior living communities](#). The remainder stay in their own homes or the homes of family members. Which means that if their health declines or assistance is required, it is often provided by family as:

- **Caregiving has become the new “normal” according to a [Merrill Lynch study](#).** More than 8 out of 10 caregivers (82%) provide unpaid care for one other adult. As [life expectancy grows for those living to age 65](#), caregiving has become a major responsibility. Among caregivers,
 - 15% provide care for two adults.
 - 3% provide unpaid care for three or more adults.
 - 16.6% of Americans (39.8 million caregivers) provide care for an adult (age 18 or older) with a disability or illness.
- **Long-distance caregiving** – those who are an hour or more from an aging relative. By 2020, the number of long-distance caregivers is expected to [grow to as many as 14 million](#). For those caregivers thrust into caregiving who live more than an hour away, Mayo Clinic offers a long list of [considerations](#) to help loved ones and reduce their own worry and guilt.
- **Technology plays a role in helping caregivers and their loved ones.** As more older adults remain at home, family caregivers may begin to look for technologies that can help make older adults, especially those living alone, be and feel safer in their homes. These technology categories range from in-home personal emergency



response devices (PERS), mobile personal emergency response devices health monitoring (mPERS) and in-home health monitoring technologies. In addition to utilization by family members, insurance companies like Humana have partnered with Philips, seeing the benefit from in-home technology like the offerings from Philips Lifeline to help keep [Medicare Advantage members out of the hospital](#).

How Philips Cares® helps caregivers share care and be there more effectively. Recently Philips introduced [Philips Cares®](#), its aging and caregiving service that assists caregivers with common issues associated with caregiving, including:



Figure 1 **Philips Cares® Application**

- **Managing the care circle.** This [care circle](#) contains the set of individuals who participate in caregiving or want to know about a loved one's status, whether they are responsible for care, or a long-distance caregiver. They are the individuals who can share access to notes about the care, including daily activities, updates about care, as well as updates from and about the services used by the care recipient.
- **Managing the caregiver's availability to participate in care.** Older adults are increasingly remaining at home, rather than in senior living or skilled nursing settings. Families and neighbors in the care circle accept greater responsibility for the care recipient's wellbeing, whether that involves sharing updates and reminders, to accepting responsibility for delivering food or taking loved ones to appointments.
- **Managing the services used to help a loved one be and stay safe and well.** Today, Philips Lifeline is one of the services that Philips Cares connects with and expands. It is important to the care circle that the devices that are part of that service remain operational in their utilization.





Figure 2 Philips Lifeline devices managed through **Philips Cares®**

Helping reduce worries about wellbeing of aging loved ones – Philips Cares® helps:

- **Alert families to changes in a loved one’s status.** The status changes include the use of the Philips Lifeline service and can also include information from update notes provided by members of the care circle.
- **Enable the sharing of notes among caregivers.** For care circle members with the Philips Cares® app, the text notes add extra value and insight about what’s happening in the care recipient’s day – especially valuable to long distance caregivers who are unable to be there in person.
- **Access tailored content from Philips Cares® specifically for caregivers.** Philips has provided additional content for Philips Cares® users that is relevant to caregivers, and the health circumstances of the care recipient, for example, including information about falls and older adults.
- **Be alerted to status of devices.** These are those such as wearables and health monitoring technology that are included in the Philips Lifeline service.

Helps mitigate social isolation among aging loved ones.

The Philips Cares® service is appropriately named – it is an enabler for caregivers to both participate in care – shifting the conversation from ‘Is she okay?’ to the more positive “It’s great that she took a walk with her grandson today!” These can include:

- **Sharing caregiving.** Dividing responsibilities among members of the care circle is a way to enable continuous contact with care recipient. Through the notes, for example, an adult daughter can ask a sibling to stop in and see their mother on a day and time when she cannot be there.
- **Involving family members, even those long-distance.** The updates from either devices or local caregivers enables others in the family to check in – perhaps respond with a suggested call -- with aging loved ones.
- **Seeing comments about activities that included the loved one.** While it is important to know that a loved one is up and about, wearing their device, Philips Cares® will also help long-distance or working family members know that their loved one has had an experience today or yesterday that was engaging.

