

Seniors determined to stay in own homes

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(CNW)—A newly released study shows that Canadian seniors are determined to live in their own homes as long as possible.

In the study, the majority of people aged 65 to 85 said they will do whatever it takes to avoid moving into a nursing home or extended care facility.

Canadians aged 65 to 85, as well as people aged 40 to 64 who have at least one parent living, were interviewed for the second annual Living for Today - Ready for Tomorrow survey conducted by Ipsos-Reid.

Eight out of 10 of those surveyed said they would do everything they can to avoid moving to an extended care facility or nursing home and 97 per cent say they are trying to be pro-active about their health.

However, less than half (46%) have researched ways to live independently at home and just four out of 10 have made modifications to their home to ensure it's a safe environment. A mere three per cent say they are on a waiting list for an assisted living facility.

"Although the study revealed a strong desire for independence, it also showed that many seniors will not admit to needing any assistance," says Holly Quinn, chief nursing officer at Bayshore Home Health, the sponsor of the study. "Close to three-quarters of older Canadians claim they don't need any help at all around their home."

According to Quinn, these attitudes could be detrimental in the long run and reduce an individual's chances of remaining independent. She suggests that there a number of steps that seniors and families can take a number to plan for a future of independent living:

Talk openly with family, friends and health care professionals about future needs and possible living arrangements. Discuss the alternatives available (including home health care, relying on family and moving to a seniors home or long-term care facility). Allow everyone an opportunity to provide input on the best approach.

Evaluate current living arrangements. If an individual has a large house to maintain or they need to use the stairs frequently, a move to a smaller home might make sense.

Consider modifications to the home to increase independent living options. Simple changes like making sure windows are easy to open or door locks are simple to operate can make a big difference in someone's enjoyment of their home. A variety of resources are available from the Public Health Agency of Canada (www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines) or the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (www.cmhc.ca).

Since most falls occur at home, especially in the kitchen, on the stairs or in the bathroom, take some time to review any potential hazards. For example, make sure stairs are well-lit, eliminate throw rugs and use a non-skid bath mat.

A little bit of help can go a long way to maintaining an independent lifestyle. Consider hiring help for housekeeping, grocery shopping, travelling to medical appointments or even companionship.

If there's a health issue or an individual has recently been released from a hospital stay, additional care may be needed. Investigate the possibility of having a nurse visit to help with ongoing care or recovery.

It is also important to take care by eating properly and remaining active.