

The good and the bad of women living longer

By Susan L. Hickey | Your Own Retirement
Originally published in May 2017

The good news is women are living longer; the bad news is women are living longer.



Longevity means living a long life; however, nowhere does it indicate how long or how fulfilled your life will ultimately be.

Longevity for women means yes, more time for family and friends, but it also raises some very important questions: Who will take care of me? Will I be able to afford to stay in my house? What if I get sick and need to move?

These are all good questions to ask when thinking about longevity. Although there are plenty of reasons to worry, there are also many ways to prepare for this journey. That is why it is imperative for women to include their lifestyle into retirement planning.

Lifestyle retirement planning is taking into account all of the aspects of your current lifestyle as well as the possible future issues that may interfere with your goals.

Planning for the unexpected is the only way to prepare. Crossing your fingers and hoping will not help when that crisis occurs. For a woman, we don't want to just reach a milestone in age; we also want to enjoy ourselves along the way.

There are many ways to accomplish your retirement goals, but the most important part is to begin. Here are a few things to consider adding to your Lifestyle Retirement Plan:

Health Care Costs

As we seen over the past years, health care costs are not decreasing. Some experts believe that an 8% increase over the next many years will be the average. To combat the potential increase of premiums, co-pays, and medication costs, it is a good idea to build these additional funds into your retirement plan.

In terms of Medicare, do you know what Part A, B, and D cover? Part A covers hospital, Part B covers medical, and Part D covers Medicare prescriptions. Educating yourself on the different parts of Medicare will help you prepare the costs associated with each one.

Long Term Care

Women are natural caregivers. We take care of our loved ones, but often times we neglect care for ourselves. What will you do when you have no one to look after you?

Long term care (LTC) is depending on someone else to care for you in the late stages of your life for an extended period of time.

LTC policies are changing. Many are focusing on home health care as opposed to only covering outside facilities. Regardless of which one you prefer, planning for this is essential. According to the 2016 Genworth Cost of Care Study, costs are estimated at approximately \$82,000 per year for a semi-private room in a nursing facility per year and over \$92,000 per year for a private room.

These costs are real and there are ways to protect yourself and your loved ones. Again, taking the first steps to acknowledge this issue and then see what you can do about it is the most important thing you can do for yourself and your future caregivers.

Long term care insurance may not be for everyone, but long term care itself is very likely to be part of your future concern. Take the burden off your caregivers and get yourself covered.

Planning doesn't eliminate all your risks; however, NOT planning does increase the chance that your retirement will not be the lifestyle you want. Don't work your entire life and then leave the best part up to someone else.

If you are married or have a significant other, take the steps together, there is no reason that retirement should not be a shared experience as well.

Remember these are just a few of the items to be considered as you start planning. Working with a professional will help guide you through this process to achieve a worry-free retirement.

Susan L. Hickey is a financial professional at Your Own Retirement, LLC (yourownretirement.com/womansworth). She helps guide clients, many of which are single women or female heads of households, on the many facets of planning for retirement. Because of her advocacy Sue combines numerous elements of retirement income planning through the use of insurance products, which includes strategies for claiming social security benefits, Medicare costs, long-term care concerns as well as traditional income needs. She holds her life and health insurance licenses, and has earned the distinguished Retirement Income Certified Professional designation.