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How Covid-19 Will Change Aging and Retirement

Among other things, expect more aging in place and a wave of innovation to help make that happen

By Lewis Gregoryan
Illustration by Jason Raish

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In the pandemic revealed holes in our mental and physical health, it is also quickly reshaping how Americans will face retirement and old age in the years to come.

The virus is bringing sweeping changes, mainly by "accelerating developments already under way," says physician and entrepreneur Bill Thomas. For example, "retirees of older generations, who have been reluctant, have little choice but to learn technology and use it to stay connected."

Some changes to stem will be permanent, including greater investments in assisted living facilities and greater emphasis on home modifications and other measures that some people who can continue to work will—and for as long as possible, says Laura Carstensen, director of Stanford University's Center on Longevity.

"It's going to make people more environment-dependent," she said.

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Here are some of the changes we can expect:

Fewer nursing home residents and more aging in place. Nursing homes have been the hardest hit by the coronavirus, with more than 100,000 residents and staff members dead, by some estimates. Many people will go home, where most adults say they want to remain. There will be more home-based medical monitoring, more home-based care and more living arrangements that reflect an everyday, we-all-plan-here-we-want-to-live-and-die-here deliberately.

Lessons learned from the virus may even help people who live in nursing homes, according to Paul Alper, author, and a retired emergency medicine physician, says Paul Alper, author, and a retired emergency medicine physician, says Paul Alper, author, and a retired emergency medicine physician, says

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