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Multi-level vs. 1 floor living

Sunday, October 19, 2014

When we were looking for a retirement home, realtors directed us mostly to ranch style houses for "one floor living." Conventional wisdom advises that as we get older, climbing stairs will be difficult or impossible.

That made sense except the house we liked, right on the lake, has 3+ levels. The master bedroom suite, "the apartment" as my grandchildren call it, is at the top. The laundry room is in the walk-out, finished basement. The loft, overlooking the kitchen/dining room has an office and bedroom. Every level has a bathroom. Yeah, we were ready to retire, but not yet downsize.

There are also 106 steps down to our dock. Was this foolish? Only time will tell.

What I have discovered is that my brand new SPAT records a LOT more steps when I'm at home than when I spend a few days at my parents' house in town – the convenient ranch style house of 1 floor living. (My parents are gone now, but we kept the house).

I completely understand the need for one floor living if you already have a medical condition that makes climbing stairs difficult. However, must we consider it as inevitable?

Is avoiding stairs when you are able to do them a good idea? After all, we are advised to take the stairs not the elevator when at work. So in retirement does that advice no longer apply?

Of course, I don't have the answer. If the time comes that DH or I can't climb stairs, there are options.

I can move the washer & drier to the kitchen.

There are 2 bedrooms on the main floor with a "senior" type bathroom renovated when my Mom lived with us.

Those steps down to the dock? If we can't manage those, why live at the lake? Maybe that's the time that living 25 miles from town isn't smart. We do have that easy living ranch house that Mom left me.

Meanwhile, I'll trek up and down and up and down and give my SPAT a workout.

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**IFDEEVARUNS2**

My mom never gave up her two story house, and was climbing up to her bedroom every day until the end. It made sense for her.

Enjoy your lake house!

2426 days ago

**CD4199227**

I have no idea - we get steered tot he one floor plans as well.

Right now no balance or knee or hop issues.

Live now with an eye towards the future.

2426 days ago

**MARYJEANSL**

I agree with you. I am glad to have a two-story house because the stairs may be all the exercise I get on certain days. If I had a one-story house, I would be in even worse shape than I am in. I am happy that I can still manage stairs, and I am happy to do so, because it reminds me that, even though I am not in good shape, there are still some things I can do.

2427 days ago

**PHEBESS**

Definitely keep up with the stairs for as long as you can! My father kept our big old house, though in his last year he moved to the ground level and didn't go out if it was icy. Maintain as long as you can, and then adjust when you need to.

2427 days ago

**DDOORN**

Sounds like a beautiful house that'll keep you hopping! What a wonderful way to build movement into our daily routine!

Don

2427 days ago

**SMOKY_TEA**

That is a great decision: you have a back-up plan if you and stairs no longer get along but right now, those extra steps all go into your health and well-being. I am so pleased that you have resisted conventional wisdom, which so often tries to make old babes of us prematurely.



2427 days ago

**DOVESEYES**

Great decision. Enjoy.

2427 days ago

**PHOENIX1949**

"Those steps down to the dock? If we can't manage those, why live at the lake? "

The view!! Water is calming.

2427 days ago

**WALLAHALLA**

I wish we had stairs. That would make a great free workout!

2427 days ago

**GINIEMIE**

When Steve died, I bought a ranch with the objective of being able to offer my MIL a safe place to stay as she has a few mobility issues and I figured they'd eventually get worse. Well mom is still living in the condo with her two friends. BUT when Erik had his accident we did not need to look for a new home, he was able to move in with me. Yes we had to modify my house as I've stated in my blogs, but we had a house with no stairs for Erik to adjust to. I miss the running up and down the stairs, but I do not miss 4 bedrooms, 2 1/2 baths a full basement-only partially completed and a garage full of things Erik and I would never use. I regret I didn't buy one of the houses with an upstairs bonus room for grandchildren and crafts-but let's face it we live and learn. When I visit my other children I use the upstairs bathrooms and when we volunteer I use the stairs as much as possible.

I would love to live on the lake and so would Erik but he would not be able to do the stairs very often.



2427 days ago

2021

SPARKNB

My folks still take the stairs, less though, now that they are in their late 70s. But they are both overweight. But they still do it multiple times a week (this is in a ranch house, stairs are for basement: storage, laundry, extra space).

Retiring to a lake -sounds lovely! Stairs will keep you younger than not having them.



2427 days ago

V



ONEKIDSMOM

I'm glad I read this this morning! I have a multi level home and sometimes the only activity I might get on a lazy day is going from level to level doing laundry, putting things away, etc. I have thought about whether I'd be able to stay here as I get older... 30 years from now, when I'm in my 90's? As long as I can do those stairs, I will do those stairs! They KEEP me able.



2427 days ago

V



LINDAKAY228

I think if you can do the stairs go for it! I'm almost 60 and a year ago had a severe stroke with a brain bleed (might have said this before, not sure) My balance is affected. But I can do steps if I hold a rail. When I looked for my apartment this past June I specifically asked for a second story one for the steps I would climb (I also go out early in the morning and go up and down them a lot of times for exercise) and because I didn't want anyone above me. At church my Sunday School class is on the second floor and there is an elevator and stairs. I take the stairs if I can use a railing up and down then I'm okay. I don't avoid stairs and if there are stairs at the mall I use that instead of the escalator.

2427 days ago

V



SWEETNEEY

Live til you can't live no more.

2427 days ago

V



SPINNINGJW

From a therapeutic standpoint, if you can still climb stairs, DO IT! The old adage "use it or lose it" does apply.

I agree with the dock - if you can't handle the steps to the dock, why live on a lake? I would LOVE to live on a lake!

I loved my 2 story Prairie Box style house, and I find it difficult to get in many steps in my apartment. Someday.....

Having gone on Home Visits with Occupational Therapists at my last job gave me a lot of insight into how a home can be adapted to the needs of its occupants. Moving out of a home you love does not have to be a "given."

2427 days ago

V



POINDEXTRA

I also question the inevitability of needing a single floor residence. Good for you for doing all of those stairs. Your house sounds fab too!

2427 days ago

V



KRISZTA11



Visiting hilly towns I often notice very old ladies, climbing long flights of stairs slowly but persistently. They look fit and strong for their age.

2427 days ago

V



MISCHAKEO

I have a three level house also. I say we stay multi leveled as long as possible. Yay for spats.

2427 days ago

V



WATERMELLEN

I also live in a three story house -- with our bedroom on the third floor. And keep fit running up and down the stairs (Charlie's finding it more and more difficult: we're OK at least for now!)

I often think that (if it were really necessary) putting in an elevator would be less costly than moving!!

2427 days ago

V



CD14815535



It's an interesting thought about homes and trying to make them fit as we get older. I've had several of these thoughts as we cannot dynamite my mom (91) out of her bi-level. And although she gets around with a cane and does some fancy maneuvering to get up and down the 10 steps to the bedrooms and the same to the basement--I wonder why it is I think she has to move. She's told me that when she needs to have things arranged and/or move in with me she'll let me know, lol. Still worry though.

On the other hand, I can see why you're racking up SPA steps!

2427 days ago



CD4114015



I so totally agree with you! We have a ranch now with a basement and I go up and down as many times a day as I can make (making 3 trips out of 1, etc) We plan (Lord willing) to move south (same state) back near my boys next Spring. I do have minor knee issues but I still look at ranch AND 2 story (with basement. Only criteria there is that master br also be on main floor should the issues arise later on but I am not counting on that either!

Great blog!
2427 days ago



RIDLEYRIDER



I live in a 2-story house...now looking at one level in our retirement...hmm....food for thought!

2427 days ago



PICKIE98



Your home sounds beautiful..I have never considered anything but a one story home, but I spent my whole work day walking and running up and down stairs. Bad knees and arthritis, fibromyalgia now rule my transportation.

I do still get my 10,000 steps a day, but on level ground.

2427 days ago

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