

an Francisco (CNN Business) This is a story about how life could end for many of us: at home surrounded by high-tech sensors, voice assistants and automated pill dispensers. And there's a "companion" robot to ward off loneliness.

Or it's a story about being able to age in your own house instead of an assisted-living center, and maintaining your independence and video chatting with your grandkids.

Technology to help monitor, comfort and care for the elderly is becoming increasingly mainstream. But we're only just starting to consider how it will change the way we age.

At CES this month, the annual technology show, companies — from small startups to Samsung — were pushing senior care as the next big thing.

Who will take care of us?

The population of older adults is growing, because of aging baby boomers and longer life expectancies. The number of people over age 65 in the United States grew by 37.2 million from 2006 to 2016, according to the US Department of Health and Human Services.

At the same time, the ratio of younger to older family members is declining, creating a shortage of family caretakers down the line. This is coupled with an increasing shortage of professional home health workers. With the right technology, older people could stay in their own homes longer, and unpaid family caretakers could keep their jobs or spend less money on hired health aids.



The Samsung Bot Care prototype could take vitals and track sleep patterns.

Some tech devices are still years away from hitting shelves. For example, Samsung's newly announced mobile Bot Care robot watches you sleep and takes vital signs. Short and gleaming white with a touchscreen for a face, the prototype could act as a part-time health aide, according to Samsung. In addition to taking blood pressure and heart rate readings, the robot could remind someone to take their medicine and guide them through exercises.

Preventing falls and calling Ubers

But some devices are already being used in the real world to help the elderly, including voice assistants and sensors that track movement. Smart home products can be set up to send text notifications when someone leaves a stove on or wanders out of the house, and older