Who Will Care For You?

Understanding the facts about elder care and assisted living will help you and your family be prepared and protected.

Safety Alert
A new warning about laundry pods

Why Water Works
8 surprising health benefits

Smarter choices for a better world
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Get a deal. Without the ordeal.

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Ratings Overall scores are based on a scale of 0 to 100. We rate products using these symbols:
- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Very Good
- Excellent

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5.0

OCTOBER 2017, VOL. 82 NO. 10
The Compassionate Care You Need

OF ALL THE DECISIONS we make in a lifetime, few are as personal or emotional as the decision to move yourself, a spouse, a parent, or another loved one to an assisted living facility. We often go to great lengths to find the right car, phone, or refrigerator to meet our specific needs, so it goes without saying that choosing a residence we can trust to offer compassionate care to a beloved family member at a vulnerable time of life is of the utmost importance. With medical care growing more sophisticated and the population growing older, the average age of new assisted living residents was 84 in 2016—and assisted living facilities now account for 17 percent of America’s senior housing, a 33 percent increase from just five years ago. What’s more, these residents tend to be sicker than previous generations.

With all the stress that can come from caring for or paying for the care of an aging loved one—a responsibility that research reveals falls disproportionately on adult children, especially daughters—it is vital that the assisted living marketplace operates in a way that puts the needs of consumers first. But as this industry grows, obstacles still remain that can prevent us from making the best choice for our family and getting the peace of mind we need.

This month, in “Who Will Care for You?” on page 28, we’ll provide insight and resources that allow you to better determine the quality, value, and safety of facilities you may be considering—and we’ll update you on the importance of having meaningful staffing and training standards, greater price transparency, and the establishment of “resident rights” so that you can make this difficult decision with confidence and clarity.
Self-Driving Standards

WHAT’S AT STAKE
Though autonomous vehicles could greatly reduce car crashes and other incidents caused by driver error, the evolving technology also raises other safety questions. For instance, it’s unclear how reliable autonomous systems will be, or how alert a human will need to be in a self-driving car.

As Congress considers legislation, Consumer Reports recently testified at a hearing on self-driving cars, held by the House Energy and Commerce Committee. The hearing comes as the number of traffic deaths in the U.S. is on the rise.

Our testimony—a consumer voice on a panel dominated by industry stakeholders—focused on exploring the safety potential of self-driving vehicles while ensuring that new challenges are anticipated and addressed. We stressed that lawmakers should require sensible, enforceable, evidence-based measures for the good of consumers.

“It’s not clear what the actual safety impacts will be as companies extensively introduce automated driving systems,” said William Wallace, CR’s policy analyst, during his testimony. Compared with proven advanced active safety systems in cars today—such as automatic emergency braking with forward-collision warning—we know little about whether autonomous driving functionality will be safe.

Wallace stressed that research should be released to the public. To further our mission to advance car safety for consumers, CR welcomed David Friedman as our new director of cars and product policy and analysis. Friedman, who formerly served as both deputy and acting administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, is a respected leader and innovator.

Student-Aid Protections

WHAT’S AT STAKE
Some for-profit career colleges have saddled students with steep debt without providing the education they promised. Though recent rules adopted by the Department of Education aim to prevent such abuse, the agency is now considering dialing back these safeguards.

The “Gainful Employment” rule, enacted in 2015 under former President Barack Obama, requires career colleges to demonstrate that their graduates are making a living wage despite student loan payments. The colleges risk losing their federal financial aid if, for example, a typical graduate’s annual loan payment exceeds 20 percent of his or her discretionary income.

And last fall, the Department finalized “Borrower Defense” rules that make it easier for students to have federal loans discharged if a school defrauded or misled them. CR helped shape both of these protections and recently joined more than 50 consumer groups to oppose the Department’s efforts to delay, dismantle, and weaken them. Informed by years of public evidence and diverse stakeholder engagement, we believe these rules should be vigorously enforced, and even strengthened.

WHAT YOU CAN DO
Add your voice by sharing how student debt has affected your life, at ConsumersUnion.org/share-your-story/studentdebt.

The Robocall Resistance

WHAT’S AT STAKE
Consumers are inundated with unwanted automated prerecorded marketing calls known as “robocalls” at all hours of the day. Not only are these computer-generated calls a nuisance, but the scammers behind many of them rip off Americans with convincing but phony sales pitches, to the tune of an estimated $350 million annually. And the epidemic is getting worse, because it’s now easier for swindlers to trick you into answering.

Technology has made it simple to “spoof” a phone number so that a robocall can show up on caller ID masked as a legitimate number in your area code. “The Federal Communications Commission is considering a proposal that would strengthen a phone company’s ability to block spoofed numbers.

CR’s advocates organized a group of consumer organizations in August to file comments with the Commission, urging the agency to move forward on the proposal, and to take additional steps, such as revising its proposed definition of the phrase “illegal robocall” to include autodialed or prerecorded text messages and voicemails.

WHAT YOU CAN DO
Almost 750,000 consumers have joined our End Robocalls campaign, which works to push the phone companies and the FCC for free, reliable tools to block robocalls. To join this effort, go to EndRobocalls.org. Or go to ConsumersUnion.org/end-robocalls/solutions for tips on how to block these maddening calls.

WHAT YOU CAN DO
To read Wallace’s testimony for CR, go to CR.org/selfdrive1017. You can also contact your lawmakers at senate.gov and house.gov and ask them to help establish strong rules for automakers and their advancements in automation.
I read the article about ditching cable with great enthusiasm. I tried both Sling TV and Hulu with Live TV, and both initially looked like great alternatives to cable. That was until I turned on my home-theater system. Their streams don’t provide sound in digital 5.1 format, only stereo sound. That’s just not good enough in today’s world. Content, price, and device compatibility are obviously important for streaming services. For home-theater aficionados sound quality is just as critical.

—Patrick Conlon, Brookfield, CT

**EDITOR’S NOTE** Yes, sound quality is important. To have 5.1-channel sound, both the streaming service and the streaming device need to support multichannel audio—as well as the content. Amazon, Netflix, Vudu, and others stream content with 5.1-channel sound. But some of the cable-replacement services, such as the ones you mention, don’t currently support multichannel audio. Sling TV’s live TV is stereo-only; some of its video-on-demand content offers 5.1-channel audio. DirecTV Now also streams on-demand content in Dolby Digital 5.1 on Amazon Fire, Apple TV, and Roku.

I read with interest your article “Does Anyone Still Need Cable?” which gave me insight into offerings such as Sling and Hulu, but I missed any discussion of DVR function such as TiVo.

—Paul Kuckein, Los Altos Hills, CA

**EDITOR’S NOTE** The focus of our August article was on streaming services, not hardware such as DVR devices—but we like them, too! Roku, for example, has generally been our top media-player recommendation, with an easy-to-use interface, lots of content, and good search capability. We’ve also written favorably about several TiVo devices, including the Bolt and Roamio models. We especially liked that the Roamio combines over-the-air reception with streaming services seamlessly.

I appreciate the article, but you missed the significant issue of data caps. Cable TV does not count against your internet data cap. Once you stream, all your viewing counts against the cap, which could be a significant added cost.

—Mike Fillmore, via CR.org

**EDITOR’S NOTE** Many of the larger home internet providers that impose data caps (a limit on the data you can use per month), including AT&T, Comcast, and Cox, have upped their caps to 1 terabyte per month, which should be more than sufficient for most streaming homes. Cablevision (now owned by Altice), Charter/Time Warner Cable, and Verizon don’t have caps. But certain internet service providers, including Suddenlink (also now owned by Altice) and CenturyLink, have lower caps. If you want to shift to streaming, check to see whether your ISP imposes a cap and whether there will be a surcharge if you exceed it. Many offer an unlimited data plan, but you can pay quite a bit more—Comcast, for example, charges an additional $50 per month.

Safe and Sound on the Road

A glaring omission in your automobile reviews is your failure to provide measured data for cabin noise levels. A review may include an offhand comment regarding cabin noise, but there is no supporting data to validate it. Because there is no measured noise-level data offered,
a reader has no means to compare one vehicle with another. Because of changes in the way manufacturers construct a vehicle’s frame, this information has become increasingly relevant. Please consider adding noise-level data to your reviews.
—David Causier, Seal Beach, CA

EDITOR’S NOTE In the past we recorded sound pressure levels in test vehicles, but we stopped because we found that the quality of the noise is more important than the instrumented readings. Harsh sounds are more dissatisfying even if they aren’t as loud as other sounds. So today we rate all tested vehicles for dissatisfying noise and make our evaluation part of the ratings score under the metric labeled Noise. Cars with green chevrons in this category tested well for a quiet ride.

IN YOUR AUGUST 2017 Road Report, you describe all of the great safety features available on cars today. I have all of these and wouldn’t drive without them. But I have a question. All of these features can be tested easily to make sure they are working except for automatic emergency braking. I certainly don’t want to try driving my car into a vehicle to test it. So how can one be assured that the system is working?
—Robert Arzu, Las Vegas

EDITOR’S NOTE You definitely don’t want to test your own automatic emergency braking system—which is why we do it for you. At CR’s Auto Test Center, we have special equipment to test AEB at city and highway speeds. Still, keep in mind that an AEB system will not always prevent an accident, but it could lessen the severity.

TO UNDERSTAND which advanced crash-avoidance technologies are truly safest, in addition to consumer survey data, we need objective evaluation criteria for each system as to how well they perform. Is Consumer Reports planning any test-track evaluations of each of the individual crash-avoidance technologies? It would help the consumer understand the differences between the cars they are considering.
—Dan Cohen, Elkridge, MD

EDITOR’S NOTE Advanced safety features remain fairly rare today, so we focus on telling consumers which vehicles have them, when they come standard, and when they are an option. (Check our regularly maintained list of models that offer advanced safety features at CR.org/systems1017.) We also award bonus points as part of our Overall Score to car models that have forward-collision warning and automatic emergency braking as standard across a vehicle’s model line.

THE AUGUST ROAD REPORT disclosed how effective safety technologies are in reducing the number of crashes. However, the report did not discuss any reduction in auto-insurance premiums for purchasing a car with safety technologies. The benefits should be shared. Especially because each accident prevented is a double benefit for the auto insurance company—each crash prevented also eliminates a crash for the other car.
—Lloyd Smith, Los Alamos, NM

EDITOR’S NOTE Though we have not investigated insurance discounts for autonomous emergency braking and forward-collision warning, our 2016 analysis of auto insurance premiums in 50 states and Washington, D.C., did find a significant discount for one type of safety feature: electronic stability control (a technology that minimizes skidding). Colorado had the biggest median discounts—almost $200 for one driver and one car; and $600 for two cars, two adults, and one teen driver. Across the country, median discounts for this stability feature were greatest for households with teen drivers, though a third of states had no discount at all.

YOU DON’T APPRECIATE a system until it prevents an accident. I bought a Subaru Legacy (2013) with Eyesight, and yes, it does give false warnings. However, as I was bringing the car for its first oil change, a truck cut out in front of me, as well as a BMW 3 series in the lane next to me. My car started braking before I could, then I slammed on the brakes. I missed the truck by less than 6 inches. The BMW without the system crashed into the truck. We got out to exchange numbers with the truck driver, and the BMW owner asked me how I reacted so quickly. I told him the car did it, and his reaction was classic: “I have got to get that system!”
—Samuel Shukovsky, via CR.org

Sinkhole Solutions
I READ “What You Don’t Know About Home Insurance” (August 2017) and contacted the top two companies, Amica and USAA, for a quote. Your rating about their courtesy was spot-on. However, I found that no insurance coverage for homes was being offered for the area in which I live, central Florida, due to “sinkholes.” In a rather pointed case of “ Macy’s telling Gimbels” I was directed to fmap.org to seek homeowners insurance elsewhere.
—George Del Monte, The Villages, FL

EDITOR’S NOTE Florida has more sinkholes than any other state, so the Sunshine State requires that standard coverage include “catastrophic ground cover collapse”: a sudden, visible collapse of the ground that damages the insured structure, which is then condemned and ordered vacated. If a sinkhole doesn’t do all that, you might not be covered—unless you have a sinkhole endorsement or separate policy, which Florida insurers are required to offer and costs extra. As for your specific needs, Amica says it insures homes in The Villages area based on a case-by-case risk assessment, including sinkholes. And USAA says that if it can’t write a policy it will offer specialized insurance through alliances with a variety of insurance companies. Otherwise, we suggest you shop for the best rates and coverage using Trusted Choice, a website run by the Independent Insurance Agents and Brokers of America, a trade association.
Product Updates
The latest ratings from our labs

Not Your Average Joe

We’re spilling the beans on the best coffees and coffee makers, secrets to making the perfect cup, and the surprising health benefits of java.

by Julia Calderone

Stand Your Grounds
The Chemex coffee maker produces a balanced brew that earned high marks from our tasters.

*Source: Trends in Endocrinology and Metabolism, October 2014
AMERICA HAS A CRAVING for coffee. Though a steaming cup of joe has fueled the morning routines of many for generations, U.S. coffee consumption is now at an all-time high: Approximately 62 percent of us drink it every day—an increase of 5 percentage points over last year, according to the National Coffee Association. Coffee drinkers across all age groups, from teens to seniors, have a seemingly insatiable thirst for the stuff. Many of us also have a growing preference for high-quality brew, with more than half the coffee we consume now classified as gourmet. It’s a preference that’s becoming much easier to indulge: The number of specialty coffee shops (think Intelligentsia, La Colombe Coffee Roasters, and Stumptown Coffee Roasters) increased tenfold between 1993 and 2013.

Most of the coffee we drink, though, is still brewed at home, in no-nonsense drip coffee makers. (See our ratings of the best on page 13.) In their ceaseless quest for the perfect cup, aficionados are also experimenting with new and rediscovered “artisanal” brewing methods, which, it turns out, really do make a difference in how coffee tastes. (See “Battle of the Brews,” on page 11.)

Retailers, eager to cater to devotees willing to pay premium prices, are offering fresh gourmet beans from around the world. According to market research firm Mintel, 30 new Ethiopian coffees hit the U.S. market between 2012 and 2016, more than from any other African country. (See our ratings of Ethiopian beans on page 12.)

But the best news about our collective coffee craze is that it appears to be good for us. A raft of research done in the past two decades has shown that coffee may well be linked to a reduced risk of a number of illnesses including certain cancers, heart disease, and perhaps even Alzheimer’s disease.

**Powerful Health Benefits**

A few decades ago coffee was considered not healthy and possibly harmful, says Edward Giovannucci, M.D., Ph.D., a researcher and professor of nutrition and epidemiology at Harvard’s T.H. Chan School of Public Health. “But more recent studies seem to suggest that there’s a benefit to drinking coffee,” he says.

The largest analysis we’ve seen examining coffee consumption and health, based on two studies that included more than 700,000 people from more than 10 countries, was published online in the Annals of Internal Medicine this past July. Researchers from several universities across the U.S. and Europe found that coffee drinkers were less likely to die prematurely. In one study, those who drank one to three cups of coffee per day were 12 to 18 percent less likely to die during the study period from any cause, including cancer and heart, liver, and respiratory diseases. These results suggest that moderate coffee drinking is not detrimental to your health and could even have health benefits, says Neil Murphy, Ph.D., a scientist at the World Health Organization and a lead author of one of the studies.

Other research published in the past five years has found that regular coffee drinkers seem to have a lower risk of type 2 diabetes and Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s diseases, as well as healthier livers, faster metabolism, and decreased risks of endometrial, prostatic, and colorectal cancers.

Studies have also confirmed what most of us already know: The caffeine in coffee can make you more alert and increase concentration, and may boost learning, decision-making, and performance on cognitive tasks.

Researchers think that the keys to coffee’s health benefits are the antioxidants and other biologically active compounds responsible for its distinctive flavor. “It could be a combination of all of these compounds working together,” says V. Wendy Setiawan, Ph.D., an associate professor of preventive medicine at the University of Southern California’s Keck School of Medicine and a researcher on one of the studies published online in July.

**Some Coffee Caution**

Increasing your coffee consumption beyond three cups a day might not up its health benefits. In fact, some studies have suggested a link between more than four or five cups a day and lower bone density, especially in those at higher risk of osteoporosis. (Caffeine potentially limits the body’s absorption of calcium, but adding 2 tablespoons of milk to each cup can
help counteract this effect."

Other researchers have found that certain compounds in coffee can raise cholesterol, although some evidence suggests that brewing with a filter might trap those compounds.

The caffeine in coffee can also have undesired effects: Just one cup can cause sleep problems and irritability in some people, and even regular coffee drinkers can experience headaches, nausea, anxiety, jitters, and increased blood pressure when they drink more than their bodies can handle.

How much caffeine is too much? U.S. government dietary guidelines say that up to 400 mg per day—the amount in about two to four 8-ounce cups of coffee, depending on the type of bean and how it’s brewed—can be part of a healthy diet for most adults.

Certain high-risk groups, however, should limit their caffeine intake. Pregnant women, for instance, should consume no more than 200 mg per day (the amount in about one 12-ounce cup of coffee), because caffeine could increase the risk of spontaneous abortion as well as growth delays in the fetus. Caffeine can also prevent the absorption of or create new side effects of common drugs such as certain antibiotics, antidepressants, and antipsychotics. Ask your doctor whether it’s safe to drink coffee if you’re on medication.

For people who need to avoid caffeine, drinking decaffeinated coffee may also be a healthy option, Giovannucci says. Recent research suggests that decaf provides similar health benefits to caffeinated coffee but without the side effects. Decaf has slightly fewer antioxidants than a regular cup, but research shows that it’s also associated with a lower risk of type 2 diabetes and many other perils.

—Additional reporting by Janet Lee
## Battle of the Brews

We asked our expert tasters to evaluate coffee made using five popular methods. The results reveal that the flavor of the final product is shaped in part by the brewing technique you choose.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For a clean, balanced cup</th>
<th>For a bold, full-bodied taste</th>
<th>For a refined single serving</th>
<th>For a simple, quality brew</th>
<th>For easy, no-nonsense joe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chemex</td>
<td>French Press</td>
<td>AeroPress</td>
<td>Pour-Over</td>
<td>Drip</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**THE BREWER**

- **French Press**
  - This hourglass-shaped pour-over coffee maker differs from other pour-over models because of the Chemex-branded filters, which are made of heavy paper and designed to regulate the filtration rate and keep sediment out. The glass body has a wooden handle that wraps around the neck of the carafe. It’s easy to pour coffee from the Chemex, but the narrow neck makes it difficult to clean by hand. The wooden handle isn’t dishwasher-safe, but it can be easily removed.

**THE RESULTS**

- Coffee brewed in the Chemex earned high marks for complexity, acidity, and overall quality in our taste tests; the filter minimized the presence of solids in the cup. If you like an aromatic, balanced brew with sweet, juicy undertones, this one’s for you.

**THE BREWER**

- **AeroPress**
  - This one-of-a-kind miniature coffee maker sits on top of a mug and is small enough to travel with. Mix water and grounds in the carafe, then plunge the top down to force the brewed mixture through a micro filter designed to capture even very fine particles. Our tester noted that the process is a bit precarious because the tool has to be balanced on top of a cup. It’s also only big enough to brew a single cup at a time.

**THE RESULTS**

- Without a paper filter, this coffee holds on to its natural oils, creating a full-bodied taste. The mesh filter holds back most of the grounds, but small, powderylike coffee grounds (called “fines”) can remain in the brew, creating a somewhat viscous cup.

**THE BREWER**

- **Pour-Over**
  - This method puts you in control of a slow, careful pour over the entire bed of coffee, ensuring even distribution. The brewer is relatively easy to clean, dishwasher-safe—and cheap enough that you won’t be heartbroken if the carafe shatters in the sink: The filter basket will work on top of other containers as well.

**THE RESULTS**

- The AeroPress produced a high-quality brew, with good body and aromatics but just a touch less complexity. The company claims that—unlike a French press—this method leaves “no grit in your cup,” but our tasters found that the coffee sometimes contained a bit of fine coffee silt.

**THE BREWER**

- **Drip**
  - In general, drip coffee makers force you to sacrifice some control, but convenience often trumps perfection, especially first thing in the morning. At the top of our drip ratings (see chart on page 13), this programmable model brews in the ideal temperature zone of 195° to 205°F and prepares 40 ounces in just 10 minutes. The controls are generally easy to use and intuitive.

**THE RESULTS**

- Scoring slightly lower than other methods in complexity, smoothness, and overall quality, the drip method is hard to beat on convenience. Our tasters noted a higher astringency, and the fruity, somewhat sweeter notes of the coffee were masked by a sharper acidity.

**THE BREWER**

- **Pour-Over Brewer**
  - This one-of-a-kind miniature coffee maker—a common problem with cheaper models.

**THE RESULTS**

- Our tasters noted a sharpened acidity. Coffee were masked by sweeter notes of the coffee were masked by a sharpened acidity.
Ratings  Better Beans More coffees from Ethiopia are hitting store shelves than are gourmet grinds from any other African country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Sensory Score</th>
<th>Specs</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Flavor Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>La Colombe Coffee Roasters</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>Whole Bean</td>
<td>$15</td>
<td>$20 5¢</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Green Mountain Coffee</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>K-Cup</td>
<td>$12</td>
<td>NA 75¢</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Birch Coffee</td>
<td>74</td>
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<td>$15</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Stumptown Coffee Roasters</td>
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<td>$24 65¢</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Green Mountain Coffee</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>Whole Bean</td>
<td>$10</td>
<td>$16 40¢</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Trader Joe’s Organic Fair Trade Shade Grown Ethiopian (13 oz.)</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Whole Bean</td>
<td>$10</td>
<td>$12 35¢</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Irving Farm Coffee Roasters</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Whole Bean</td>
<td>$17</td>
<td>$23 57¢</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Coffee Beanery Ethiopian Yirgacheffe (16 oz.)</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>Whole Bean</td>
<td>$14</td>
<td>$14 32¢</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Starbucks Ethiopia</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>Whole Bean</td>
<td>$14</td>
<td>$14 32¢</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Intelligentsia Kurumi Organic Ethiopia (12 oz.)</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>Whole Bean</td>
<td>$21</td>
<td>$28 71¢</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Illy MonoArabica Ethiopia (8.6 oz.)</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>Whole Bean</td>
<td>$15</td>
<td>$27 63¢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The Coffee Bean &amp; Tea Leaf Ethiopia Yirgacheffe (16 oz.)</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Whole Bean</td>
<td>$14</td>
<td>$14 35¢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Gloria Jean’s Coffees Ethiopian Yirgacheffe (16 oz.)</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Whole Bean</td>
<td>$16</td>
<td>$16 37¢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Archer Farms (Target) Organic Ethiopian Yirgacheffe (10 oz.)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Whole Bean</td>
<td>$6</td>
<td>$10 24¢</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Jim’s Organic Coffee</td>
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<td>Whole Bean</td>
<td>$15</td>
<td>$20 50¢</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<td>Whole Bean</td>
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<td>Orleans Coffee</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Whole Bean</td>
<td>$10</td>
<td>$10 24¢</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How We Test:** Two coffee experts tested and rated 18 Ethiopian coffees. Except for the K-Cup, each was brewed by drip method according to the coffee company’s directions or standard recipe. Thirteen products were rated Excellent or Very Good, and three of these are CR Best Buys. Those higher in the ratings generally had a more complex flavor and fewer defects. Price is per package; prices per pound and per 6-ounce cup are also listed.
### Ratings

**True Brew** Drip coffee makers are easy to use and can brew up to 14 cups at once. Most can be programmed the night before to start in the morning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
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**DRIP COFFEE MAKERS WITH CARAFE**

Online subscribers can go to CR.org/coffeemakers for complete, up-to-date ratings.

**HOW WE TEST:** We calculate the Overall Score by measuring the temperature of water during the brew cycle, noting how long water remains between 195° and 205°F—the standard set by the Specialty Coffee Association for optimal brewing. Next we assess convenience of the machine and carafe, noting how easy it is to program each model, fill its reservoir, install any filters, and clean up. We also note how easy it is to handle the carafe without dripping or spilling. Brew Time is calculated to the nearest minute using 40 ounces of water on the machine’s regular cycle.

OCTOBER 2017

CR.ORG 13
Load 'Em Up

The Samsung FlexWash (left) and LG's TwinWash system let you launder two loads at once.
Washing machines use a fraction of the amount of water they did a few decades ago. But the trade-off with today’s super water-efficient appliances is that it takes longer to get your laundry done.

“For the average-size load in our tests, most front-loaders and high-efficiency top-loaders take around 70 to 110 minutes on the normal-wash/heavy-soil setting,” says Emilio Gonzalez, a CR engineer who runs our laundry appliance tests.

Twenty-five years ago, you could knock off a load in 45 minutes using an agitator top-loader. But with less water—and cooler water—going into these high-efficiency machines, cycle times have grown longer to give clothes more time tumbling in the detergent solution.

To address consumer complaints that the wash times are too long, manufacturers have introduced washers with bigger capacities, and some have added specialty speed cycles to the lineup. Now Samsung and LG—fierce competitors in the appliance arena—have developed another way to do more laundry at once. The latest solution? A second, smaller washing unit that lets you wash a few delicates, for example, while sheets go through their own cycle in the main washer or quickly wash your teen’s sweaty soccer jerseys before the big game.

First out of the gate in 2015, LG paired a front-loading washing machine with a separate mini washer, called the SideKick, built into a pedestal. Together they’re known as TwinWash, and the system gives you the option of washing a full load and a smaller one at the same time—or running either machine on its own. Samsung recently introduced FlexWash, which accomplishes the same feat with a different design: It’s one machine comprising two washers, which you can also use separately or simultaneously. The built-in mini washer is above the front-loader.

To find out whether these multitasking machines deliver, we tested the Samsung FlexWash—for a whopping $1,500—and pitted it against LG’s TwinWash system, which we tested when it debuted. Do these dual washers speed up the task? Turn the page to see the results.

Can Your Washing Machine Work Harder?

Wish you could do more than one laundry load at a time? Now you can. But how much money is that convenience worth to you?

by Kimberly Janeway
The Might of Two Minis: We Test, You Decide

CLAIMED CAPACITY The front-loader, at 5 cubic feet, is big enough to fit a king-sized comforter. The 1-cubic-foot mini washer can handle small loads, say, four T-shirts, three pairs of yoga pants, or about 30 small, delicate items, such as bras and undies.

FEATURES Samsung’s main washer has 12 cycles, a steam option to improve stain removal, and WiFi connectivity that allows you to receive alerts on your smartphone when a cycle is done. The mini washer has four cycles, and you can select cold or warm water and an extra-rinse option. Shown here in black stainless, this washer also comes in white. And for those who prefer a matching set, Samsung extends this two-in-one concept to a matching dryer.

WASH TIMES On the normal-wash/heavy-soil setting, a full load in the main washer takes about 100 minutes. The mini washer finishes in about 40 minutes on the normal cycle.

PERFORMANCE The front-loader scored Excellent overall. That, along with the brand’s front-loader reliability, earned it a spot on CR’s recommended list. The mini washer is fast and gentle but not very water-efficient, and it can’t match the cleaning power of its larger counterpart.

THE SETUP FlexWash is a single machine made up of two integrated washers that can run separately or at the same time. Samsung’s mini top-loading washer sits above the front-loader, increasing the total height of the unit to 47 inches (about 8 inches taller than most front-loaders). Homeowners need not add supply lines: The typical setup of one water line for hot and another for cold will work.

Samsung FlexWash

LG TwinWash

CLAIMED CAPACITY Of the compatible LG front-loaders we tested, capacity ranged from 4.3 to 5.8 cubic feet. (A king-sized comforter requires over 4.5 cubic feet.) The mini washer measures 1 cubic foot, so it can fit the same amount of laundry as the Samsung mini.

FEATURES The front-loader’s features and finish vary (white, graphite steel, or, shown here, black stainless), depending on the model you choose. The mini washer comes in these finishes as well, and has six cycles with cold or warm water and an extra-rinse option.

THE SETUP Two machines, sold separately, form the LG TwinWash system: a $700 mini washer called the LG SideKick and an LG front-loader of your choosing. The front-loader sits atop the SideKick. Compatible LG models, which are represented here by the range of scores in our ratings, sell for $700 to $1,800.

The SideKick’s drawer houses a mini washer, and it can be put to use below most LG front-loaders made since 2009. The appliances can run independently or simultaneously, and the connections are standard: one water line for hot and one for cold. You can also install the mini washer under a 2017 LG front-control dryer if you have a top-loading washer.

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FEATURES The front-loader’s features and finish vary (white, graphite steel, or, shown here, black stainless), depending on the model you choose. The mini washer comes in these finishes as well, and has six cycles with cold or warm water and an extra-rinse option.
WASH TIMES Of the compatible LG front- loaders, the normal-wash/ heavy-soil settings take 75 to 120 minutes. The mini washer runs about 40 minutes on the normal cycle.

PERFORMANCE Compatible LG front-loaders have scored Very Good to Excellent overall in our ratings. Those scoring Excellent made our recommended list, because brand reliability wasn’t a problem. As for the mini washer, its performance was similar to Samsung’s.

The Verdict

Though these dual machines differ in configuration, their performance is quite similar. “One appliance didn’t rise above the other,” Gonzalez says. We found Samsung’s design to be more convenient because the mini washer is on top, meaning there’s less bending as you load and unload. But because this unit takes an all-in-one approach, only consumers who are replacing their washer can adopt this new technology.

“On the other hand, LG’s configuration allows for more flexibility,” Gonzalez notes. If you’ve purchased an LG front-loader since 2009, you could add this secondary element for $700. With the LG, you have to bend down to load and unload the mini washer, almost at ground level. But here’s a heads-up for taller readers: As with a pedestal, the LG SideKick raises the height of the front-loader by 14 inches or so, making it easier to load and unload the main machine.

No, these new systems won’t double your clean-clothes output—far from it. But if you need to wash a small load or get a specific item clean before an event—without waiting until you have a bigger load—these miniature machines could help.

IN RECENT YEARS, federal efficiency standards have limited the amount of water washing machines can use. As a result, new appliances are far more water-efficient than older models. That goes for almost any brand or type. Some consumers, noticing the small amount of water used, wonder whether their new washer is doing as good a job at getting clothes clean. We’ve even heard from readers who were so concerned that they added more water to the machine with a bucket or garden hose.

That’s a really bad idea. In fact, adding too much water can result in dingier clothes.

“Cleaning results may suffer because the clothes can’t rub against each other in excess water, which is how newer machines are designed to work,” explains Emilio Gonzalez, a CR engineer who runs our laundry appliance tests.

“We’ve seen the effects of these stricter standards in our test lab. An agitator top-loader that CR tested 20 years ago may have used more than 40 gallons of water to wash an average load. Here’s what that number looks like today: Agitator top-loaders still submerge dirty loads in water, with some models using up to 26 gallons per cycle. Models in that category with an automatic load-sensing feature (which senses the weight of the load to determine the right amount of water) used about 19 gallons to wash one of our 8-pound test loads. High-efficiency top-loaders typically use 12 to 17 gallons. And last, front-loaders, as a group, are the most water-efficient, using about 7 gallons to wash a test load while still doing a very good job at cleaning.

You’ll know your washer is using too little water if cottons come out dirty or nearly dry straight out of the machine. “The only time we saw a model use extremely low levels—less than 2 gallons—our test load came out visibly dirty,” Gonzalez says. “We figured out that, in this case, that front-loader had a software problem, which the manufacturer has since fixed.”

If you’re disappointed in the way your washing machine cleans, never add water with a bucket or hose. Instead, try these tips:

► Allow enough room for the dirty laundry to move around in the washer; don’t overstuff.
► Use a more aggressive setting, such as a heavy-soil, heavy-duty, bulk-items, extra-rinse, or deep-fill option.
► Try the steam feature. In our tests, it improved cleaning slightly.
► Pick a laundry detergent that packs more punch. (See our ratings on page 19.)
► Pretreat tougher stains. For expert tips on how to combat common stains, such as ink and red wine, go to CR.org/stains101.
SAFETY ALERT
Liquid Laundry Detergent Pods Pose a Lethal Risk

Consumer Reports already recommends keeping these packets out of homes where children younger than 6 are present, but we now also recommend the same for homes with cognitively impaired adults.

Liquid laundry packets are colorful like candy and squishy like playthings, which helps explain why young children can be drawn to them—and sometimes chew on them. But Consumer Reports has learned during a monthslong investigation that children aren’t the only ones at risk. Adults with dementia have ingested pods, too.

In the time since Tide Pods debuted in 2012, ushering in a new product category, eight deaths related to ingesting liquid laundry detergent packets have been reported to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). Six were adults with dementia, and two were children under 2. According to the CPSC reports, which CR obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request, six of the eight deaths involved packets made by Procter & Gamble. That ratio is in line with the company’s market share. P&G’s Tide Pods and sibling brands represent 79 percent of the market, according to IRI, a Chicago-based market research firm.

Sales of laundry pods totaled $1.2 billion over a recent 12-month period, which is 17 percent of all laundry detergent sales.

“We are aware of accidental ingestions related to our liquid laundry pacs among adults with dementia,” Elizabeth Kinney, P&G’s senior communications manager for North America fabric care, told CR. “We are deeply saddened by this and have taken action to understand and help prevent these types of incidents.”

CR has been calling on manufacturers for five years to make pods safer and the packaging less appealing. P&G and other companies switched from clear containers to opaque ones that hide the colorful packets inside, and added a bitter-tasting substance to the film of the packets themselves.

“The most recent data available to CR shows that the changes haven’t yet made a significant dent in the number of calls to poison-control centers. As a result of the new data highlighting the potential risks to adults with dementia, we now recommend that family members caring for anyone who is cognitively impaired not keep pods in the home,” says James Dickerson, Ph.D., chief scientific officer at CR. “We also continue to believe that manufacturers should modify the appearance of laundry packets so they do not look like candy.”

Adults with moderate to severe dementia may mistakenly try to eat items that aren’t food, and some with a certain form of the disease may become increasingly interested in putting things in their mouth. “The reasons for these behaviors are not entirely known,” says Gregory S. Day, M.D., a neurologist specializing in the diagnosis and management of dementia at the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. “Likely they reflect loss of function in brain areas that regulate or restrict such behaviors, returning the patient to a more primitive, child- or baby-like state, where such behavior is common.”
is common.\textsuperscript{1} such behavior or baby-like state, where a more primitive, child-like return to a pre-verbal state is common in severe dementia. To \textquoteleft return\textquoteright{} the patient to these states, restrict such behaviors, as they may look for items in areas that regulate or govern physical functions.

Loss of function in brain areas that regulate or govern physical functions may become increasingly evident in dementia at the later stages of the disease. In some cases, \textit{eating} becomes \textit{drinking}, as patients may mistake laundry pods for food, and some with dementia may mistakenly try to eat items that aren\textquotesingle;t food, and some with dementia may mistakenly try to eat items that aren\textquotesingle;t food. A certain form of the disease may become \textit{drug-seeking} behavior. Adults with moderate dementia may become increasingly interested in putting things in their mouth. "The reasons for this are immense and varied, and they are not always \textit{under our control.}"

These single-use packets are convenient, but they don\textquotesingle;t perform as well as our top liquid detergents. Consumer Reports advises against using liquid-filled laundry pods in homes where children under 6 or adults with dementia are present.

\textbf{PODS/PACKS}

These single-use packets are convenient, but they don\textquotesingle;t perform as well as our top liquid detergents. Consumer Reports advises against using liquid-filled laundry pods in homes where children under 6 or adults with dementia are present.

\textbf{HOW WE TEST:} We wash cotton swatches saturated with body oil, dirt, grass, blood, chocolate, wine, and tea in a front-loading washer using cool water, because that\textquotesingle;s one way to help save money on energy. We then use a special instrument to measure how much of the stain is removed. The Overall Score is based on cleaning performance for all stains, giving weight to more common ones, like body oil.

\textsuperscript{1}Does not contain brighteners. \textsuperscript{2}This product is a single-load liquid laundry detergent packet. Consumer Reports believes it should be avoided in homes where children under 6 years old or adults who are cognitively impaired are present. Contact with or ingestion of the packet\textquotesingle;s liquid contents may pose a risk of serious injury or death.
Winning Kitchen Combos

Choosing a range, refrigerator, and dishwasher that perform well and look great together is no easy task. We’ve found the perfect matching suites for every need and budget.

by Paul Hope
IF ALL YOU care about when shopping for a new range, refrigerator, or dishwasher is peak performance, your job couldn’t be simpler: Take your pick of the top models in our ratings and move on to your next home improvement project.

You should know, however, that you’ll probably end up with models from more than one brand because manufacturers rarely earn the top spot in our ratings across all appliance categories. So the look of your refrigerator may clash with the dishwasher from another maker. “One brand’s stainless steel might have blue undertones, while another’s might look darker or have a brighter sheen,” explains Claudette Ennis, CR’s market analyst for kitchen appliances. “To ensure your major appliances match, you’ll likely have to stick with a single manufacturer.”

If a unified look is your only priority, choosing a predetermined group of matching models might work. Retailers frequently offer discounts on appliance suites (comprising a range, refrigerator, and dishwasher) from a single brand. But that approach isn’t ideal, either: Your appliances will match, but because of performance inconsistencies across individual brands, you could end up with a dishwasher that works great and a wimpy range that takes 18 minutes to boil a pot of water.

If you really want it all—top-performing appliances that match—you’re in for more of a challenge. We’ve done the detective work to find kitchen appliances that match and are up to the task, hand-picking four suites that will suit a variety of needs and budgets (see “Suite Deals,” on page 22). You can also come up with a winning kitchen combination of your own, by using the ratings beginning on page 24 and following these simple strategies.

BUILD YOUR SUITE AROUND THE RANGE. The range is the true workhorse of the kitchen, and in our test labs it’s where we see differences in performance play out in the most meaningful ways. So choose the model in the configuration you need (gas or electric) with the features you want and the best performance you can afford.

After you’ve selected the range, move on to refrigerators and dishwashers made by the same brand. You may not find our highest-rated models among them, but chances are good that you’ll identify ones with the features and performance to satisfy your needs.

MIX AND MATCH MODELS. Retailers incentivize buying multiple appliances from a single brand, but you usually don’t have to buy the exact models they advertise to get the discount. Most will let you select other models from the same maker, which means you can choose better performers from among our ratings and still enjoy the savings.

REPLACE ONLY WHAT’S NEEDED. If you need just a single appliance at the moment, chances are good that a new purchase will match the older ones in your kitchen—as long as you choose a model from the same brand. Manufacturers update the looks of handles or controls from time to time, Ennis says, but they rarely make significant changes in their finishes for this very reason.

AVOID CREDIT CARD PITFALLS. Major retailers, including Home Depot and Lowe’s, offer credit cards with up to six months of interest-free financing on purchases over $299—provided you pay the balance within that time. “If you don’t pay the balance in full, you will owe all of the deferred interest on the purchase,” explains Gail Hillebrand, associate director of consumer education and engagement at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

Whether you’re remodeling your kitchen or just want to upgrade your range in time for the holidays, we provide all the research you need on the following pages.
Suite Deals

We’ve assembled four matching appliance suites to highlight some of the best, brand-specific bundles from the models in our ratings. Go with one of the four combos here, or use our ratings on pages 24 to 26 to tailor a matching suite to your needs.

Best Matching Suite With a Gas Range

Most people prefer gas ranges. The burners respond to adjustments quickly and work well with virtually any style of pot and pan. Plus there’s no cooking surface to worry about scratching, as with glass-topped electric ranges. Total: $5,300

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Our top-rated double-oven gas range, this model offers solid top-of-the-range performance and beautiful baking. “This is a feature-rich, high-performing range at a very competitive price,” says Tara Casaregola, who runs CR’s range and cooktop lab. The LG has two high-power burners (some have only one), allowing you to boil water for pasta and sear a steak at the same time.

Another appliance that tops the charts, this French-door refrigerator maintains ideal temperatures throughout the cavity. It’s whisper quiet (some fridges produce a hum when the compressor kicks on), has spillproof shelves that capture liquids without letting them drip onto the food below, and has a through-the-door water and ice dispenser.

A matching suite requires a sacrifice somewhere. This dishwasher, one of LG’s best-performing models in our ratings, comes in below the best models we’ve tested. Even so, it cleans well and operates quietly and efficiently, though it’s only average at drying dishes. Plus it has a dedicated third rack for cutlery, freeing up space elsewhere for larger dishes.

Best Matching Suite With an Electric Range

The best electric smoothtop ranges routinely perform better in our tests than their gas counterparts. Their high-power burners tend to heat water faster, even if their low-power, simmer burners are slower to react to changes in temperature. The glass ceramic tops can be scratched, though not easily, and can be difficult to clean. Total: $4,600

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</table>

This stellar double-oven smoothtop is second only to a slide-in model from Samsung that’s $500 more. And it boasts a unique design: Two doors give way to one baking cavity, which you can divide with a partition. Bake at two different temperatures with the partition in place, or remove it to hold a turkey or roast. It bakes well, broils beautifully, heats fast, and holds steady simmers.

“While this model doesn’t earn the top score in our ratings, it’s not too far behind the very best French-door refrigerators,” explains Joseph Pacella, who leads the refrigerator testing program at CR. “It still hits the ideal temperatures throughout the refrigerator and freezer, and it’s quiet and efficient, too.” This model also contains spillproof shelves and a through-the-door water and ice dispenser.

This model, part of a new line, earned very good marks for cleaning and drying in our tests. But you’ll give up peace of mind with this purchase. Though Samsung refrigerators and ranges fare well in our annual reliability survey, its dishwashers break or have serious issues at more than twice the rate of the most reliable brands. As a result, you won’t find Samsung dishwashers on our recommended lists.
Best Budget-Friendly Suite

CR's testing routinely reveals that you don't have to pay a lot for a great range. The ranges here outperform a handful of aspirational pro-style ranges that cost five times as much. You won't get as many features, but performance can still be stellar where it counts most.

Total: $2,455 with gas, $2,650 with electric

---

Best Pro-Style Suite

Pro-style appliances make a bold aesthetic statement. Ranges often benefit from multiple high-power burners, but the fact is they don't fare better in testing than our top conventional ranges. If you want to feel like a professional chef in your own kitchen and aren't bothered by the cost, this suite might be the option for you.

Total: $14,760

---

Product Updates

- **Best Pro-Style Suite**
  - **KITCHENAID KDRS407VSS**
    - $4,140
    - **87** OVERALL SCORE
  - **KITCHENAID KBFNS02ESS**
    - $9,000
    - **79** OVERALL SCORE
  - **KITCHENAID KDTM704ESS**
    - $1,620
    - **83** OVERALL SCORE

- **CR recommends just three of 32 pro-style ranges currently in our ratings. This KitchenAid earns the highest marks of any 30-inch model, thanks to steady simmering, even baking, and fast boiling. Know that you'll need both a gas connection and a 220-volt electrical line to power it. Given that some pro-style models cost $7,000 or more, this pick seems a relative bargain.**

- **Like most built-ins, this French-door refrigerator sits flush with surrounding cabinetry and stands more than 80 inches tall. It holds steady temperatures, though it uses more electricity than the competition. And while it looks quite large—measuring 6 inches wider than most built-in models—it actually offers less usable storage space, due to its fairly shallow depth.**

- **Thanks to mostly hidden controls, a sleek handle, and helpful features (like a third rack for cutlery), this dishwasher holds its own in our pro-style suite. The model rated higher for cleaning performance than almost any other dishwasher in our ratings. It's quiet and efficient, with a relatively short, 110-minute cycle.**

- **Compared with ever-popular French-door refrigerators, side-by-side models like this one make it easier to keep the contents of your freezer organized and accessible, rather than lost in the depths of a bottom drawer. This budget-friendly fridge sits near the top of our ratings for side-by-sides. It maintains temperatures perfectly and costs only $91 per year to operate.**
Ratings: Step 1: Start With the Range

To build a matching appliance suite, begin by selecting the range, based on your fuel source and budget. The final few digits in a model number indicate finish; each option is listed by the model number we tested.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended Rank</th>
<th>Brand &amp; Model</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Overall Score</th>
<th>Finishes Available</th>
<th>Test Results</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SMOOTHTOP, SINGLE OVEN (30-INCH)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>Black Stainless</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
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<td>Black Stainless</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>GAS, SINGLE OVEN (30-INCH)</strong></td>
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<td>GE PGB980ZEJSS</td>
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<td><strong>PRO-STYLE DUAL-FUEL (30-INCH)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>KitchenAid KDRS407VSS</td>
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<td>Black</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Online subscribers can go to CR.org/ranges for complete up-to-date ratings.

**HOW WE TEST:** To test high cooktop heat, we time how long the highest-powered burner takes to bring a 6-liter pot of water to a near-boil. For low cooktop heat, we note how well the lowest-powered burner keeps a low temperature (such as for melting chocolate), and how well the highest-power burner, set on low, holds tomato sauce below a boil. To test how evenly the ovens bake, we bake cakes and cookies on two oven racks. We broil a pan of burgers to find out how evenly they brown and to check high-heat searing. To evaluate Oven Capacity, we measure usable space. Then it gets messy: We test the oven’s ability to remove a baked-on mix of cheese, eggs, pie filling, and other food on the Self-Cleaning setting.

*We’ve included these ranges in our Budget Suite on page 23 in stainless steel; we tested white models, but performance is the same.*
### Ratings

**Step 2: Find the Right Fridge** Look for a refrigerator from the same manufacturer as your range. We hand-selected from our ratings and listed them alphabetically, so it’s easier to match.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand &amp; Model</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Overall Score</th>
<th>Finishes Available</th>
<th>Test Results</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>THREE-DOOR FRENCH-DOOR</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Frigidaire Gallery FGHB2866PF</td>
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<td>71</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GE GNE49SGSSS</td>
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<td>83</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>GE Café CYE22TSHSS</td>
<td>$2,790</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kenmore 70333</td>
<td>$3,200</td>
<td>77</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kenmore 7200[2]</td>
<td>$1,200</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LG LFC24770ST</td>
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<td>85</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LG LJXS30766S</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>✓</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samsung RF28HDEDPWW</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whirlpool WRF995SIFZ</td>
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<td>82</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whirlpool WRF532SMBM</td>
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<td>79</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FOUR-DOOR (OR MORE) FRENCH-DOOR</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenmore 72493</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>LG LNKS30866D</td>
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<td>79</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Whirlpool WRX988SIBM</td>
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<td>72</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SIDE-BY-SIDE</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frigidaire Gallery FGHS2655PF</td>
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<td>67</td>
<td>✓</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenmore 51133</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>76</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whirlpool WRS975SIDM</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BUILT-IN</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>GE Monogram ZICP360NHRH</td>
<td>$7,100</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>KitchenAid KBFN502ESS</td>
<td>$9,000</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Available Test Results**

- **Features**
  - Temperature Uniformity
  - Energy Efficiency
  - Ease of Use
  - Energy (Watts)
  - Temperature (°F)

**Score**

- 0 to 100

**Overall**

- POOR
- FAIR
- GOOD
- EXCELLENT

**How We Test:** To measure temperature performance, we see how uniformly models maintain 37°F in the fridge and 0°F in the freezer, even as we crank up the heat in our labs. Storage is also key, so we measure Usable Capacity, excluding nooks that manufacturers include but we don’t think are usable. We also measure height, width, and depth (HxWxD), rounded to the nearest inch. Noise is measured with the compressor running. Energy Cost is how much the unit will cost to run per year based on average electricity prices.

**Online subscribers can go to CR.org/refrigerators for complete up-to-date ratings.**

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**October 2017**

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CRM10_PRODUCT_UPDATES_Appliance_Suites_Recalls [P].indd 25

8/11/17 12:41 PM
### Ratings  Step 3: Pick a Dishwasher

Last, go with a dishwasher (again, listed alphabetically) from the same brand. You might have to make a bit of a sacrifice, in terms of performance, to round out your matching suite.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended</th>
<th>Brand &amp; Model</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Overall Score</th>
<th>Finishes Available</th>
<th>Test Results</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stainless Steel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Black Stainless</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>$1,620</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Online subscribers can go to CR.org/dishwashers for complete up-to-date ratings.

**HOW WE TEST:** In our washing tests, we load the machine with heavily soiled dishes and assess how clean they are when the cycle finishes. (The machine is loaded according to instructions in the owner’s manual.) We choose a normal cycle using the high-temperature option, if available. Noise is judged by a listening panel during fill, wash, and drain. We measure Energy Use, most of which goes to heating the water, as well as how much water is used per cycle. And we manipulate adjustable tines and racks to see how easy they are to use.

### RECALLS

**CHEST OF DRAWERS**
South Shore is expanding a previous recall of its Summer Breeze chests from 3,500 units to 68,300. The unanchored chests are unstable and can tip over and trap children, possibly resulting in injuries or death. The chests were sold online from February 2005 through December 2016 for about $160.

**What to do:** Call 800-290-0465 or go to southshorefurniture.com for a refund or free tip-over restraint kit installation.

**WHITEBOARDS**
Really Good Stuff is recalling about 1.6 million Write Again dry-erase whiteboards because their metal surface can separate from the wooden base, posing a laceration risk. The boards were sold in Really Good Stuff catalogs and online from March 2003 through April 2017 for $10 to $47.

**What to do:** Stop using the board. For a free replacement, go to reallygoodstuff.com or call the company at 800-801-4046.

**GLITTER IPHONE CASES**
MixBin Electronics is recalling about 263,000 liquid glitter iPhone cases because they can leak, causing skin irritation and burns.

The cases were sold at stores nationwide and online from October 2015 through June 2017 for $15 to $65. There have been reports of chemical burns, including one with permanent scarring.

**What to do:** Stop using the case, and go to getmixbin.com or call MixBin at 855-215-4935 for a full refund.
How much of a deal do I need to get on a 2017 car this fall to overcome the depreciation?

Car dealers—who finance their cars from manufacturers—are eager to clear out 2017 models in the fall because they continue to pay interest on these so-called closeout cars even as 2018 models start arriving in August. So dropping the price benefits both of you. But buying a closeout car is usually a good deal only if you'll keep it for more than five years or if you are a high-mileage driver who trades in cars every three to five years, says Mel Yu, auto analyst for Consumer Reports. “A closeout car makes it appear that you spread out your mileage over an extra year,” Yu says. So even if you go well over the typical 12,000 to 15,000 annual miles, you'll get a similar trade-in value as a lower-mileage driver who bought the same model at the start of 2017 at a higher price.

Interested? Analyze the deal to ensure that you’re really saving: Any new car, including a closeout model, loses about 10 percent of its value as it drives off the lot, so the discount should be 10 percent or higher. Also keep in mind that many cars are worth about half their original purchase price after three years. Though dealer discounts vary, the best sales happen where there is an excess of local inventory. And be aware that as of 2017, new-car sales have begun to cool after years of major growth, so automakers may offer more incentives, such as rebates or low-cost financing, to entice you.

My 13-year-old water heater seems to be working fine, but should I replace it soon?

The Environmental Protection Agency’s Energy Star program suggests replacing water heaters that are more than 10 years old, but age isn’t the only factor you should consider. At 13, your heater is probably out of warranty (most max out at 12 years). If it’s a few years past coverage, that’s a good time to look into a replacement, advises John Galeotafoire, who oversees CR’s home product testing. But an equally important factor is that—thanks to 2015 federal standards—today’s water heaters are more energy efficient. Compared with your old one, a new water heater can cut your utility bill significantly—especially if it is Energy Star certified. An Energy Star certified electric heat-pump, for example, could save a family of four $3,400 over 13 years. Plus, some utility companies offer rebates for Energy Star buys; go to energystar.gov/rebate-finder.

If you decide to buy, a new water heater can cost anywhere from $500 to well over $2,000, depending on the size and type. And installation fees can add hundreds more. “But don’t assume a new water heater will fit where your old one does,” Galeotafoire says. Even if you buy the same type, with added efficiency improvements, a new model may be larger than your old one. For our buying guide, go to CR.org/waterheaters1017.

As a new grandparent, how crucial is it that I get the whooping cough vaccine?

“On a scale from 1 to 10? Probably 9,” says Marvin M. Lipman, M.D., Consumer Reports’ chief medical adviser. That goes for anyone about to have regular contact with an infant. Whooping cough, or pertussis, is a highly contagious bacterial respiratory tract infection that can be serious in adults, but even more so for infants. In fact, half of U.S. babies under 12 months who contract pertussis end up in the hospital and, of those, one out of every 100 dies. In some cases, “you can have pertussis and not know it,” Lipman says, so an unprotected adult could pass it on. (More than 20,000 U.S. cases were reported in 2015.)

Children are most vulnerable before they receive their first pertussis shot at 2 months, but they aren’t well-protected until age 6, when they receive the last of five such shots. Even if the mother got a pertussis vaccine while pregnant (babies can inherit some immunity this way), relatives should still get the shot. If you’re under age 70, it’s likely you were vaccinated as a kid, but because protection fades over time, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises that adults get revaccinated. It takes about two weeks for the vaccine to be effective, so time your shot well before you meet the baby. Tell your doctor if you got the shot more than five years ago, or if you’ve had any allergic reactions to vaccines in the past.
Who Will Care for You?

With more of us living longer than ever before, understanding the facts about elder care and assisted living will help you and your family be prepared and protected. Here, how to look beyond the fancy lobbies and marketing hype to find a residence that will keep you or a loved one safe and happy, at a price you can afford.

by Penelope Wang
In 2010, Wallace Kirkpatrick, 89, was living alone in San Antonio after his wife died. A friend suggested that “Kirk,” as everyone called him, get an apartment in the assisted living facility where he also lived. Kirk soon settled into Esplanade Gardens. “He had a buddy there, and he got along with the director, so he fit in very quickly,” says his daughter, Tara, who lives nearby. Kirk was especially pleased by the dining service, which made grilled bacon-and-cheese sandwiches, one of his favorites, on request.

For six years Kirkpatrick was happy. But by spring 2016, when he was 95, he began to show small signs of cognitive impairment. “Once he forgot where he was going, and another time he tried to unlock the apartment next door to his by mistake,” Tara says. A newly arrived facility director insisted that the incidents meant Kirkpatrick needed more supervision than the residence could provide. That meant his family would have to move him to a facility with a memory care unit or hire additional caregivers.

The family was reluctant to consider changing residences. “It was too early to move him,” says Tara, 61, a speech-and-language pathologist. “My dad was still very functional and would have been surrounded by people far more impaired.” The family met with the director and agreed to hire private caregivers to keep a closer eye on Kirkpatrick.

He had veterans disability benefits that covered the additional costs, which came on top of the $4,000 per month for room, board, and an aide, who checked in several times a day and helped him shower and dress. With the additional aides, Kirkpatrick was permitted to remain in his apartment until he died in March 2017. “We couldn’t get it into our heads how we were paying for assisted living, when there was not much assistance,” Tara says.

Jack Collins, executive vice president of SilverCrest Properties, the parent company of Esplanade Gardens, declined to comment on the Kirkpatrick family’s experience.

### The Caregiving Gap

For older Americans, assisted living offers a compelling promise. Your aging parent can live in an apartment with hotel-like services and receive help with medication, bathing, and other tasks of daily living.

By contrast, a nursing home provides 24/7 care for seniors needing medical support. Other kinds of senior-living communities are designed for people who are more active and high-functioning. But these differences are very loosely defined, which can make comparing facilities difficult. And whereas more hospital-like nursing homes are regulated at the state and federal level, oversight of assisted living facilities is uneven at best. A good one can be an excellent choice for someone who can no longer live on his or her own. A bad one could put your loved one at risk.

Assisted living is also a growth industry. As of 2014, about 835,200 older Americans resided in these facilities, up from 733,300 in 2010, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But all too often, as the Kirkpatrick family discovered, assisted living communities lack the resources or expertise to meet the needs of a population that requires increasingly intensive medical care.

Seniors in assisted living tend to be older and sicker than previous generations. In 2016 the average move-in age was 84, with a large number of seniors arriving after a medical emergency, according to A Place for Mom, a national senior housing referral agency based in Seattle. Studies show that more than half of residents have some form of cognitive impairment, according to Paula Carder, an associate professor at the Institute on Aging at Portland State University in Oregon. “Many assisted living facilities are taking residents who have no business being there,” says Amy O’Rourke, president of the board of directors of the Aging Life Care Association, an organization of aging-life-care experts, also known as geriatric-care managers.

Not surprisingly, consumer complaints about assisted living are on the rise, according to long-term-care ombudsmen, trained advocates who operate in all 50 states. Some 55,000 complaints were filed in 2015, compared...
Safe and Sound?
The top complaints about assisted living include understaffing, slow response to calls, and threatened eviction.

rooms, share common spaces, and dine together.

**Continuing-Care Communities**
Though most assisted living facilities are standalone, some are connected to nursing homes or are part of continuing-care communities that offer multiple levels of care, from independent living to nursing-home care. Residents can move from one level to another, which may mean a move to a different section if his or her healthcare needs change.

**Specialized Care**
Some assisted living facilities offer specialized services for particular medical conditions, such as Parkinson’s disease, depression, and diabetes. But as the U.S. population ages, the biggest trend has been the number of assisted living facilities offering dementia care, says Sheryl Zimmerman, director of aging research at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Today about 60 percent of residential care communities provide a dementia care program. And almost one-quarter of assisted living communities maintain a dedicated floor or wing for memory care, or they are standalone facilities that serve only people who have more severe forms of dementia, according to the CDC.
with 50,126 in 2012, almost a 10 percent increase. In a recent survey of ombudsmen for Consumer Reports, the National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care, an advocacy organization, found that the most frequent complaints included understaffing, delays in response to calls for assistance, and threatened eviction. About 80 percent said their state government doesn’t provide sufficient regulatory oversight for assisted living facilities.

That’s not something you’re likely to hear from assisted living providers. “The marketing and sales people are trying to fill apartments,” O’Rourke says. “They’ll tell you they’ll take care of you for the rest of your life.” They’re also likely to tout their high-end amenities, such as wine cellars, libraries, and calendars crowded with cultural events.

The industry’s own surveys show high rates of satisfaction with assisted living, says Rachel Reeves, a spokeswoman for the National Center for Assisted Living, an organization that represents the country’s assisted living and other long-term-care communities. She says the NCAL “discourages undisclosed or exaggerated information” because doing so “diminishes trust and damages the relationship between the assisted living community and the customer.”

Attractive amenities can contribute to a hefty price, mainly paid out of pocket. In 2016 the median cost for a one-bedroom was $3,628 per month, or $43,539 annually, according to a 2016 survey by Genworth, a long-term-care insurance provider. In some regions, costs can exceed $60,000 per year (see the facing page). Medicare generally does not cover long-term care. Most states provide for some Medicaid coverage of long-term care in assisted living, but the coverage varies widely by state, and to qualify, the resident must spend down his or her assets and meet other criteria. Not-for-profit continuing-care retirement communities typically provide funding for residents who start out in independent living, then move to assisted living and later run out of money. Otherwise, the resident would have to move out unless family members can tap other funding. Many nursing homes take Medicaid, but at press time, because of the ongoing healthcare debate in

COVER STORY: WHO WILL CARE FOR YOU?

Why Making Friends and Fitting In Are Essential

The right assisted living facility will help your parent feel comfortable and stay engaged, which can improve health and happiness.

Use Your Instincts

Look for activities and facilities—such as field trips, a book club, or a pool—that your parent(s) might enjoy with others who have similar interests. Consider the size of the residence, its appearance, and how you see staff members interacting with residents and each other. For a potential resident, “sometimes it is just kind of a gut instinct: Do I feel comfortable here?” says Stephen Maag, a director at LeadingAge, an association of not-for-profit senior-care groups.

Visit Strategically

To really get a feel for a place, talk to as many residents as possible and make multiple visits at different times. Arrange for Mom or Dad to observe or participate in one or two activities that are appealing. Consider an overnight visit, if offered.

Ask About the Welcoming Strategy

The initial weeks after a move could be emotionally difficult. Your parent will be adjusting to a smaller space, as well as unfamiliar faces. “These places can be very cliquish,” McClanahan says. Still, the better facilities help residents feel at home as soon as possible, says David Schless, president of the American Seniors Housing Association, an industry group. That might involve a plan to connect Mom with other retired teachers, or bring your Dad into the bridge group.

Help, but Don’t Hover

Visit, but avoid weighing in on every small concern. “Let your parents do for themselves as much as they can do,” says Jeff Pine, an aging-life-care expert, also known as a geriatric-care manager, in Santa Fe, N.M.

Touch Base With the Staff

Check in with a manager about how your parent is adjusting. Mom might be making friends and enjoying activities, despite complaints you may be hearing. You might also make specific requests, such as asking a staff member to remind your parent of an activity of particular interest.

A PARTICULAR assisted living facility might look like a solid choice based on location, care services, and your family’s finances. But what’s also important is finding a good fit for yourself, or for Mom or Dad, a place where you or they can feel comfortable socially and make new friends.

"A person’s physical and psychological wellbeing can be improved by staying active and engaged," says Carolyn McClanahan, a financial planner and doctor in Jacksonville, Fla. Here are tips for finding a good match:

- Be open to different types of facilities and geographic areas.
- Be willing to visit several facilities before making a decision.
- Take along any questions you have about the facilities.
- Ask for a copy of the community’s activity calendar.
- Look for activities that interest you and your parent.
- Consider asking to meet with the staff to discuss any concerns you may have.

With the right approach, finding the right assisted living facility can be a positive experience for everyone involved.
What Care Costs State by State

The 2016 annual median cost for a private one-bedroom apartment in assisted living varied by state, with the NATIONAL MEDIAN AT $43,539.

COST OF CARE BY STATE

- **Alabama** $34,800
- **Alaska** $69,000
- **Arizona** $42,000
- **Arkansas** $37,590
- **California** $48,000
- **Colorado** $48,750
- **Connecticut** $59,400
- **Delaware** $64,416
- **District of Columbia** $80,400
- **Florida** $36,540
- **Georgia** $34,200
- **Hawaii** $49,500
- **Idaho** $38,400
- **Illinois** $46,770
- **Indiana** $42,330
- **Iowa** $42,210
- **Kansas** $46,350
- **Kentucky** $39,600
- **Louisiana** $37,860
- **Maine** $59,892
- **Maryland** $45,000
- **Massachusetts** $65,550
- **Michigan** $42,750
- **Minnesota** $38,400
- **Mississippi** $38,400
- **Missouri** $30,438
- **Montana** $42,150
- **Nebraska** $42,120
- **New Hampshire** $57,600
- **New Jersey** $59,400
- **New Mexico** $43,200
- **New York** $49,635
- **North Carolina** $36,000
- **North Dakota** $40,080
- **Ohio** $43,200
- **Oklahoma** $33,630
- **Oregon** $48,780
- **Pennsylvania** $43,200
- **Rhode Island** $59,169
- **South Carolina** $36,000
- **South Dakota** $40,440
- **Tennessee** $45,360
- **Texas** $42,180
- **Utah** $35,400
- **Vermont** $58,320
- **Virginia** $47,400
- **Washington** $54,000
- **West Virginia** $39,150
- **Wisconsin** $47,205
- **Wyoming** $47,940

Source: Genworth 2016 Cost of Care Survey
Cover Story: Who Will Care for You?

Continued from page 32

Congress, the program’s future funding was uncertain. Identifying the right assisted living facility for yourself or your parent is difficult, and loose regulatory oversight is a main reason. Under federal law, nursing homes must provide adequate nursing staff and meet other standards. But assisted living is not governed by federal rules. Each state makes its own rules, which are often minimal—some don’t require that a facility hire a licensed nurse, for example.

Many advocacy groups, including Consumer Reports, argue that stronger regulations are needed for assisted living. (See “Protections Consumers Need,” on the facing page.) “We are concerned that there isn’t enough effective public oversight, including from the federal government,” says Chuck Bell, programs director at Consumers Union, the policy and mobilization arm of Consumer Reports. The NCAL doesn’t see it that way. “Assisted living is unique to each community it serves, whether in size, services, or specialty, which makes it inappropriate to regulate on a national basis,” says the NCAL’s Reeves. “State regulation is better suited to meeting the needs of local communities.”

A Shortage of Staffers

More regulation would probably improve residents’ access to assistance, consumer advocates say. It’s not uncommon for assisted living facilities to have only one or two direct-care staffers per 20 residents at night and perhaps one or two on duty per 15 residents during the day, says Carder at Portland State University. These staffers tend to be paid low salaries, often minimum wage. Nurses are also scarce—a handful of states have provisions regarding how many hours a nurse needs to be on call, or on site, so quite often facilities have no nurse present.

Staffing shortages recently sparked a lawsuit, filed on behalf of Louise McGraw and Charlotte Rogers, who have since died, although the case is still progressing. Both lived at Greystone Inn, a West Virginia facility owned by Chancellor Senior Management. The plaintiffs’ attorneys, who are seeking class-action status for the lawsuit, allege that Chancellor bases its staffing on the parent company’s labor budgets and profit goals, and not on an assessment of residents’ individual care needs, as contractually promised.

The lawsuit alleges that McGraw fell, broke her hip, and was hospitalized because she did not get assistance she was entitled to by Greystone Inn. According to the lawsuit, McGraw repeatedly became dehydrated, she was left unattended, and her calls for help were ignored. Rogers was hospitalized for dehydration within four days of admission to Greystone, the lawsuit alleges. After her discharge from the hospital, she returned to the facility. But she was hospitalized two more times for dehydration, malnutrition, and urinary tract infection.

Executives from Chancellor did not return calls for comment. Reeves says the NCAL strongly encourages facilities to provide care by “assessing the staffing needs for each unique resident.” Adequate staffing is especially critical for dementia care, a fast-growing service now offered by about 60 percent of assisted living facilities. It typically costs about $4,700 per month. Although Carder says 38 states require dementia care training for staff, she adds that only 16 states require a license or certification for dementia care units.

Putting the Contract Under a Microscope

Getting the fine print right from the start is your family’s best protection.

Most assisted living residences will ask you to sign an admission agreement, which is a contract, before moving in. Don’t rush to sign. You’ll want to look at the contract carefully and ask an elder-law attorney to review it. “You want to be aware of all the terms, since you may not have much recourse once you sign,” says Lori Smetanko, executive director of National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care, an advocacy group.

The cost for a legal review will vary from a few hundred dollars to a couple thousand, depending on whether a facility’s contract, it may take only an hour or so to go over the details,” says Hyman Darling, president of the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys, a trade group. Here are four key provisions to consider:

Cost of Service

Be sure you understand the fees listed in the contract and how they are assessed. Some facilities might charge a comprehensive fee for room, board, and care; others might have a tier of charges that kick in for higher levels of care. You are also likely to be charged a move-in fee, says Deborah Fins, an
IT’S CLEAR THAT THE assisted living industry needs to evolve to manage the increasing health needs of the population it aims to attract. In that vein, more federal and state regulatory oversight is urgently needed to protect residents and their families. CR believes policy makers should better protect consumers of assisted living facilities by doing the following:

**Define Assisted Living and Levels of Care**

The term “assisted living” can describe anything from a facility that merely offers room and board to one that provides full-time nursing care. As a result, confused consumers can end up paying for services they don’t need or, worse, not getting the care they do need. Policy makers should establish and clearly define level-of-care classifications, and facilities should be required to use the classifications to communicate the assisted living services they offer.

**Set Staffing and Training Standards**

Staff training and qualification requirements, and minimum per-resident staffing levels, should be set according to level-of-care classifications. Qualified, licensed medical staff should monitor the overall health of residents and administration of medications. Special staffing requirements should be established for residents with high-level care requirements, including residents with dementia.

**Establish Resident Rights**

Policy makers should establish a comprehensive Bill of Rights to ensure some basic rights for residents, including the right to make everyday decisions; receive visitors at any time; refuse treatment; access and control their own money; question and object to facility practices and policies; make formal complaints to administrators and regulators; and bring lawsuits seeking court orders to stop illegal activities and violations and to compensate residents for rights, standards, or contractual violations (a right that should prevail even when residents have signed forced-arbitration clauses, which should be restricted).

**Support Aging in Place**

Policy makers should narrow the number of allowable reasons for evicting residents. Reasonable accommodations should be made, when possible, to allow a resident to remain in a facility, and all services allowable under a resident’s level-of-care designation should be made available. If a resident who initially paid privately goes on Medicaid and resides in a Medicaid-certified facility, that facility should be required to accept Medicaid reimbursement for that resident.

**Enforce Regulations**

Policy makers should establish rules requiring inspections tied to levels of care. Penalties for violations should be strengthened and applied on a per-violation and per-day basis.

**Make Price and Quality Information Transparent**

Policy makers should establish a system that enables consumers to compare costs, features, and services across facilities and types of facilities, including information related to facility inspections and disciplinary actions.

**Responsibility Party**

If you’re signing the contract on behalf of a family member who will pay the bills, don’t let yourself become financially liable unintentionally. “Make sure you are identified as an agent, not the responsible party,” says Shirley Whitenack, an elder-law attorney in Florham Park, N.J. You should have power of attorney to act for your parent, and the term “attorney in fact” should appear after your signature.

**Terms of Discharge**

The contract should include the conditions that could lead to an eviction, called an involuntary discharge, as well as the required notice, typically 30 days. Often this wording is left vague. It might say, “We can no longer meet your needs,” for example. “If the language is not specific, the management can make decisions on an ad hoc basis,” says Eric Carlson, directing attorney for Justice in Aging, an advocacy group. Ask for the terms of discharge to be limited to specific reasons, such as nonpayment and care needs that the facility is not licensed to provide.

**Mandatory Arbitration**

Many residences include an arbitration provision in their contracts, requiring disagreements to be settled by a third party and not in court. The arbitration clause is sometimes voluntary, but often it’s required. Consumer Reports believes mandatory arbitration is not good for consumers and should be banned. If a forced-arbitration clause is in your contract, cross it out before signing, or write in “refused,” says Martin Kardon, a Philadelphia trial attorney specializing in elder care. There’s little risk that your loved one won’t be admitted if you try this. If the management insists that arbitration is mandatory, you can decide whether it’s worthwhile to agree. You should also make sure you receive a complete copy of the signed contract, Kardon says. That way there will be no question about your rights.
11 Ways to Afford the Care You Need

For most people, savings and Social Security income aren’t enough to pay for assisted living. Most cobble together those assets along with long-term-care insurance benefits, home-sale proceeds, and contributions from willing and able relatives. Here are other ways to strategize the financing and keep costs in line.

Tap Your Resources
Leverage a life insurance policy. If you, or your parent, have been paying premiums on a whole or universal life policy for a decade or longer—and are comfortable with leaving less to heirs—you could tap the policy’s built-up cash value. If you borrow from the policy or withdraw your cost basis—what you paid in premiums—you’ll owe no tax. If you cash in the policy entirely, you’ll pay ordinary income tax on everything but the cost basis. “We usually recommend withdrawing up to your cost basis and then borrowing the rest,” says Joseph Truiano, a Prudential financial services manager in Paramus, N.J.

Determine whether you’re eligible for veterans benefits. Veterans and veterans’ survivors who are eligible for a Veterans Affairs pension, and who have documented physical or mental restrictions, may be eligible for an increase in monthly pension benefits, called an enhanced or special monthly pension. To qualify for pension benefits, the veteran must have served during a period of conflict, meet certain age or disability requirements, and meet certain income and net worth limits. A surviving spouse must meet certain criteria as well. A veteran or survivor also may qualify for an enhanced or special monthly pension if he or she is eligible for pension benefits and needs assistance with daily activities or is housebound because of disability. Patrick Simasko, an elder-law attorney in Mount Clemens, Mich., says the VA’s asset and net worth guidelines aren’t carved in stone. “The asset test ultimately becomes a subjective decision made by the representative processing the application,” he says. Go to benefits.va.gov/pension or vets.gov/pension for information and application details.

Take out a home loan. Homeowners who want or need to keep a home in the family can take out home equity loans or home equity lines of credit, says Theodore “Ted” Sarenski, a CPA personal finance specialist and CEO of Blue Ocean Strategic Capital. Shop for the lowest setup costs, including fees for loan processing, origination, and underwriting; appraisals; and document preparation. Some HELOCs require only interest payments during the period in which you take money out, which could be 10 years or longer. That arrangement might work well if the home will be sold within the decade. But HELOCs, based on floating interest rates, pose more risk than fixed-rate home-equity loans.

Set up a reverse mortgage. Homeowners 62 and older who have exhausted all other options and are certain they can afford to stay in the home for the long haul might want to use this gambit when only one spouse is entering assisted living. A reverse mortgage lets you tap your home equity for cash. Depending on the loan type, you can get a lump sum or draw down the money as needed. The older you are, the more you can borrow; the maximum is about 74 percent of the home’s value. Reverse mortgages are freighted with significant costs: Borrowers typically pay several thousand dollars in closing costs and fees; a one-time government mortgage insurance premium can run from 0.5 percent to 2.5 percent of the loan amount. These loans don’t have to be paid back until the homeowner moves out or dies, but borrowers still are on the hook for home insurance, property taxes, and home maintenance expenses. If you fall behind on these costs, you could lose your home to the lender, which is why you should explore this route with caution. Go to hud.gov and type “reverse mortgage” into the search box for more information.

Find the Wiggle Room
Choose an assisted living situation with a flexible pricing structure. The most expensive, all-inclusive pricing model combines all services—for instance, three meals a day, 24-hour on-call aides on your floor, transportation—rolled into one price. A less costly “levels of care” or “tiered pricing” model places the senior in a price tier that entitles her to a given number of hours of care. If she can manage without more care, that option might suffice. The potentially most affordable, fee-for-service model allows residents to pay only for services as needed. Most facilities offer at least one type of pricing structure, but if you are given a choice, make your selection with care. “Generally in the industry you can’t make a change once you decide on one type of fee structure,” says Colleen Ryan Mallon, chief marketing officer at Kendal, a network of continuing-care communities in the East and Midwest.
Look for the open beds. Where there’s a decline in occupancy or regional competition for residents, you might be able to negotiate the first month’s rent or even get it free. “If a facility has a lot of wheelchair-bound residents, it may be a sign they are loosening their rules to fill beds,” says Amy O’Rourke, president of the board of directors of the Aging Life Care Association, representing aging-life-care experts, also known as geriatric-care managers. Be sure to check for adequate staffing levels.

Choose a not-for-profit. These residences aren’t necessarily less expensive than for-profit assisted living residences. But they might cover residents who run out of funds. That protection can significantly reduce out-of-pocket expenses if your parent stays longer than the average two years. Not-for-profit continuing-care retirement communities are required to provide that guarantee to those who enter at the independent living level but might not make the same promise at the assisted living level. But some are more generous: Masonic Villages retirement communities, in Dallas, Elizabethtown, Lafayette Hill, Sewickley, and Warminster, all in Pennsylvania, guarantee continued care and services to residents who run out of funds, regardless of their level of care when they enter. Masonic affiliation is not a requirement for entry, or for the guarantee.

Opt for lower-cost rooms. As with any real estate transaction, room rent corresponds to location and size. If your parent is able and willing to be farther from the dining room, she could save perhaps $50 per month on rent, says Jim Pusateri, senior vice president of sales strategies for Brookdale, the country’s largest owner of adult-care communities. If she can handle a studio, she could save several hundred dollars a month, he adds. Residents willing to share a one-bedroom apartment, making the living room into a bedroom, could save 40 to 50 percent of the rent, depending on the facility. If you end up sharing an apartment with two bedrooms, in some cases Brookdale furnishes the common space, so you need to bring furniture only for your own room.

Discount the glitz. Consider a residence housed in an older building, or one with fewer beds, advises Maribeth Bersani, chief operating officer of Argentum, a trade association of for-profit adult-care residences. Big, new campuses operated by national or regional chains offer more amenities—at a cost—and must support expensive corporate staff. “If you have Mrs. Smith’s Assisted Living, she doesn’t have those expenses,” Bersani says, adding that Mrs. Smith will need to be vetted for quality of care.

Mind the Details In any assisted living stay, you’ll need to factor in many costs aside from rent. These might include a nonrefundable intake fee; a deposit for pets; and fees for administering medications, assistants accompanying your parent to medical appointments, phone and internet service, transportation, haircuts, dry cleaning, and cultural events. Be aware of other considerations:

**Plan for possible coverage gaps.** You or your parent could wait up to six months for the payments from a long-term-care insurer to start. If you need to cash in a CD early, your bank might waive the early withdrawal penalty for an urgent need such as entering assisted living. But if your bank won’t budge, don’t sweat the penalties, Sarenski says. “The bank will just change the interest rate back to that of a savings account,” he explains. “In this low-interest environment, you’re not missing much.”

**You can write off the cost of care.** Once the total medical expenses exceed 10 percent of adjusted gross income, you can deduct the remainder from federal income taxes for the resident. Deductible medical expenses can include long-term-care insurance premiums and the medical services provided within the facility itself. If you are covering more than half your parent’s support in assisted living, you can deduct those expenses from your own taxes when they exceed 10 percent of your adjusted gross income.

To maximize the deduction, pay for assisted living with the taxable distributions from retirement accounts, advises Michael Keeler, a certified financial planner at Peak Financial Solutions in Las Vegas. “Even with the 10 percent limit, a bill of $65,000 a year—not uncommon for assisted living—is likely to result in a sizeable tax break for most people,” Keeler says. –by Tobie Stanger
Making the Right Moves

Despite these challenges, families can find high-quality assisted living facilities. But start your search well before you or your parent actually needs care. If your parent’s health declines, assisted living might not even be an option, says Deborah Fins, an aging-life-care expert in Worcester, Mass. Many facilities will not take people who are wheelchair-bound or need help with multiple chronic conditions, but some allow residents to stay if they become more infirm. To help you target your search, here are four key questions to ask:

1. **What kind of help will the resident need?**

   Perhaps your parent no longer drives and is becoming socially isolated. Or he or she can’t manage stairs or forgets to turn off the oven. For seniors who need moderate amounts of support, assisted living could be the smart choice. Assisted living is working well for Sharon Koenig, 76,
who lived alone for two years after her husband died. “I kept waiting for him to come in the door,” Koenig says. She also was having trouble tracking her medications. With help from an aging-life-care expert, who is familiar with local facilities, Koenig looked at several senior residences, including a small nursing home.

Unlike some of the other places, Regal Palms in nearby Largo, Fla., a large facility with several levels of care, offered a varied menu of activities. Last October, Koenig moved to the assisted living section, into a two-bedroom apartment that has space for her 50-gallon aquarium. She gets help with medication but still does her own laundry. “Some people might be afraid of a big place, but I think it’s better,” she says. “There’s always someone to have dinner with.”

**Smart move:** Make sure your family member has a medical evaluation from a primary care doctor—or a specialist, if your parent has an illness—to understand the level of care required, as well as how those needs might change. For more perspective, hire an aging-life-care expert to help point you to appropriate residences. “Given the wide variation in the types of services provided by assisted living communities, it’s well worth spending the several hundred dollars for a professional care manager,” says Stephen Maag, a director at LeadingAge, an association of nonprofit senior-living groups.

2. How good is the quality of care?
Make sure the residence is licensed to provide assisted living, to ensure that there’s at least a minimum level of oversight. Take a close look at the residence’s inspection record, which indicates how often it has been checked or whether it has had complaints. (See “10 Helpful Resources,” on page 41.) Some states, such as Florida and California, maintain consumer-friendly assisted living websites that list inspection records and regulatory actions. But some states do not, or they fail to update them. You can also ask your state ombudsman’s office about a facility’s complaint record.

In the end, the best information about quality of care could come from people who visit facility residents, as well as from the residents themselves. Ask the residents specifics about care—whether meds are delivered on time, for example—and how management responds to complaints, suggests Liz Barlowe, an aging-life-care expert in Seminole, Fla.

Try to make multiple visits to the residence—including at meal time and on weekends. Most facilities will welcome you even if you don’t have an appointment. Talk to residents, and see whether the staffers seem happy or appear overworked.

**Smart move:** Ask how the residence would handle a fall, a common occurrence. Would a nurse be on hand to evaluate your parent, or would he be sent to the emergency room? And ask whether “the facility provides an on-site clinician or medical staff that can help the resident avoid the expense and health risk of an unnecessary trip to the ER or a hospitalization,” says Alan Kronhaus, M.D., CEO of Doctors Making House Calls, a North Carolina medical group that provides on-site healthcare to assisted living residents.

3. What are the real costs of care?
Ask for a written list of the fees, and make sure the information is included in your contract. (See “Putting the Contract Under a Microscope,” on page 34.) Some facilities have all-in costs that cover room, board, and care for a particular level of assistance, and others have point systems or charge à la carte. (See “11 Ways to Afford the Care You Need,” on page 36.)

Be sure to get clear information about the circumstances that could trigger higher or additional charges and how the facility assesses those fees, says Patty Ducayet, state long-term-care ombudsman for Texas. What would it cost to have your dad driven to a doctor 10 miles away vs. 5 miles away? Is it okay to hire private aides?

**Smart move:** Ask about the policy for lowering fees. Say your mom requires a higher level of care for a week to recover from a hospital stay. How quickly can the fees be cut when she has recovered? “Bumping down the charges tends to take longer than bumping up,” says Karen Jones, a state long-term-care ombudsman in San Luis Obispo, Calif.

4. Can your parent be kicked out?
Involuntary discharges rank among the top complaints in most states, according to the National Consumer Voice survey. Discharges are usually triggered by lack of payment or care needs that exceed the facility’s capacity to provide the services. The discharge terms should be detailed in the contract, as well as the required amount of notice you’ll receive, which is typically 30 days.

For Jill Goldberg, the possibility of her mom’s discharge was unexpected. Her mom, Sylvia Wenig, 94, was living in Brookdale West Boynton Beach in Boynton Beach, Fla. “We’d been getting great care there,” says Goldberg, 61, who lives near Boston. But after a hospitalization, Wenig lost her mobility and was not allowed to return to the facility.

Goldberg asked if her mother could return for a week or two to allow time to find another facility, but Brookdale refused.

Goldberg says she persuaded the hospital to let her mother stay a few more days, and with help from an aging-life-care expert, she moved Wenig to a nursing home. Says Brookdale spokesman James Hauge, “For residents who require more care than the community is able to provide, we inform them of other care options and actively help them find a community that can meet their new care needs.”

**Smart move:** Don’t rely on the marketing director’s assurances that your parent will be able to age in place.

“Verbal agreements are nearly impossible to prove,” says Jones, who recommends getting the promises in writing. With assisted living, it’s better to know exactly where you stand.
Long-Term-Care Insurance Gets a Makeover

New, more affordable policies may be worth considering

Once you or a family member starts having trouble with everyday activities, such as preparing meals and showering alone, you might need some assistance. It could be help from a home health aide or a move into an assisted living facility or nursing home. Planning for this can be a fraught exercise. But there are new types of long-term-care insurance that might help.

Researchers estimate that more than half of today’s 65-year-olds will require long-term care at some point, at an average total cost of $138,000. Most will need help for less than two years. But one in seven Americans turning 65 today will face more than five years of disability, with potentially dire financial consequences. Medicare covers only short stints in a nursing facility. Medicaid can fill the gap, but only after you’ve depleted most of your assets. But to afford an assisted living facility, you’re probably on your own.

Enter long-term-care insurance, private policies that cover at least a portion of home, assisted living, or nursing home care. A recent survey of Consumer Reports subscribers found that 22 percent were paying for the protection.

But this particular niche of the insurance industry has had problems. For years insurers mishandled how many policyholders would keep paying premiums and eventually make claims. That combined with unexpectedly low interest rates, led insurers to hike prices by double digits or leave the business. More than 100 companies sold long-term-care policies in the early 2000s. That number is down to about a dozen.

Amid these troubles, the industry is evolving, bringing consumers new coverage choices. But even the existing choices can be confusing. In the subscriber survey, many long-term-care policyholders expressed uncertainty about what benefits are covered by their policies, beyond nursing home or assisted living care. So before you shop, know the pros and cons of the three major options.

Traditional Long-Term-Care Insurance

What’s to like: The median cost of a semiprivate nursing home room nationwide is $82,125 per year, according to Genworth’s 2016 Cost of Care Survey. Assisted living runs $43,539, with home health aides charging a median of $20 per hour. Insurance gives you the peace of mind that no matter where you need care, you’ll have the money to cover at least a portion of the bill. A lengthy stay at a nursing home is less likely to drain your savings or wipe out your estate.

For a few thousand dollars a year—the recent average annual premium was $2,727, according to the industry research firm LifePlans—you’ll lock in a benefit (an average of $161 per day for a nursing home) for a set number of years (three is most common). You can include an inflation rider that increases your daily benefit over time, typically by 3 percent a year. The policies are triggered once you can’t perform two of six so-called activities of daily living (dressing, bathing, using the toilet, eating, continence, and transferring to a wheelchair) or suffer from severe cognitive impairment. Benefits start after a 30- to 90-day waiting period.

Now that insurance companies appear to have learned from past pricing mistakes, the chance of a future double-digit premium hike may have diminished. “For new policies you’re buying today, the risk of rate increases has never been this low,” says Michael Kitces, director of wealth management at Pinnacle Advisory Group in Columbia, Md.

What are the challenges: The reason premiums are so stable? “That’s because long-term-care insurance has never been more expensive,” Kitces says. And what your premium gets you is shrinking as buyers opt for lower daily benefits and shorter coverage and reduced inflation protections. “Middle-income people have essentially been priced out,” says Bonnie Burns, training and policy specialist at California Health Advocates. In 2015, the median income of buyers was $87,500, vs. $62,500 in 2005, according to LifePlans.

Despite stable rates today, Burns advises budgeting for a 50 percent premium hike down the road because there’s no predicting the future factors that could push rates up, such as a wave of long-living boomers needing care.

Also, you must keep paying the premiums until you need the care, perhaps for decades, or you’ll forfeit future benefits and all the money you’ve paid. Yet a 2015 study by the Center for Retirement Research found that more than a quarter of those who buy policies at age 65 lapse, probably because of financial difficulties or cognitive decline. “For those people, a policy is worse than useless,” says study co-author Anthony Webb, now research director at the New School for Social Research’s Schwartz Center for Economic Policy Analysis.

Short-Term-Care Insurance

What’s to like: A more modest approach to long-term care is gaining steam. A short-term policy covers up to 360 days at home or in a facility. Qualifying is easier. Unlike with traditional insurance, you might not have to answer as many medical questions.
underwriting questions. And the premiums are far lower—a 65-year-old might pay $928 per year for a one-year policy with a $150-per-day benefit, according to the American Association of Long-Term Care Insurance.

If you spend less than the daily benefit, check the terms of your coverage. Some policies allow you to carry forward the unused amount and stretch out the coverage period longer than a year. And because the potential benefit period is shorter and more predictable, these policies have a better history of rate stability, says Stephen D. Forman, CLTC, senior vice president of Long Term Care Associates in Bellevue, Wash.

A year of coverage might be all you need. The AALTCI reports that 41 percent of long-term-care insurance claims run out within a year. If not, notes Forman, a short-term-care policy “might get you into a nursing home that wouldn’t have accepted you on Medicaid.”

What are the challenges: These policies might not cover all care options and may have stricter requirements, so you need to consider what’s most important for you. For example, not all pay for assisted living or home care.

What’s more, if the point of insurance is to protect against a catastrophe, these policies fail that test. Though you might be able to pay for a year of care out of income and savings, multiyear stays can wreck your finances. “You want insurance for the really bad scenario,” says Colorado Springs, Colo., financial planner Allan Roth, who suggests taking a small benefit or a longer waiting period instead. “That way you partially insure but still protect yourself.”

Hybrid Life and Long-Term-Care Policies

What’s to like: Another increasingly popular option is a policy that combines life insurance with long-term-care coverage. Though still a small part of the market, these policies have seen a 50 percent sales spike since 2012, LIMRA reports. With a hybrid policy, you can tap the death benefit to pay for long-term care. If you don’t need help, your heirs get the full payout. “You’re guaranteed to get your money one way or another,” Forman says. Rates are considered “noncancelable,” which means premiums are fixed for life (and often paid all at once up front).

What are the challenges: A single premium means you’ll have to come up with tens of thousands of dollars at once. In 2016 the average single premium was $89,000, according to LIMRA, an insurance marketing research group. You may also buy life insurance you don’t need. And, unlike with traditional long-term-care insurance, the premiums are not tax-deductible. But the biggest risk is that you could forego thousands of dollars in potential earnings on your investment if interest rates rise, because the policies don’t guarantee that you’ll earn market rates. “Rates are at 40-year lows,” Kitces says. Those lost earnings, he adds, could end up making hybrids the most expensive long-term-care policy of all.

—by Ellen Stark

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10 Helpful Resources

Finding information about assisted living residences in your area will require some digging. Online resources can speed your search. You can also enlist expert help that can save time and avoid costly mistakes.

For an overview of senior housing options
AARP Comprehensive information on independent living and nursing homes, as well as assisted living. aarp.org/home-family/caregiving/senior-housing

To start your search for an assisted living facility
Caring.com Click Assisted Living, then enter your ZIP code to find residences; listings include communities and services with current state licensing. caring.com

To check the assisted living regulations in your state
National Center for Assisted Living Go to Advocacy, then State Regulations to see rules for every state. acl.org

To get help from an aging-life-care expert
Aging Life Care Association Click on Find an Aging Life Care Expert to search in your state. aginglifecare.org

A starting point for checking assisted living violations
A Place for Mom
Click on your state to find out how to obtain inspection reports. aplaceformom.com/assisted-living-state-licensing

To contact your state long-term-care ombudsman
National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center Use the map tool to locate links for your state. ombudsman.org

To get a legal review of your contract
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys
Click Consumer Resources, then Find an Attorney. nela.org

For the basics on long-term-care benefits
LTCRepair.gov This federal website provides an overview of long-term care, as well as links to Medicare and Medicaid information. longtermcare.acl.gov

For first-person insight into assisted living
The Thin Edge of Dignity Dick Weinman, a retired professor of broadcast communications at Oregon State University, became wheelchair-bound in 2005 after a car crash. In this short documentary, he describes his personal experience with assisted living and how he manages to stay active. Type “Thin Edge of Dignity” into the search box. youtube.com
The New Super Bowls

The latest food craze is deep dishes packed with whole grains, vegetables, and protein. Here, we taste and test to reveal which we think will bowl you over.

by Rachel Meltzer Warren
They go by many names: “power bowls,” “grain bowls” ... even the enlightened-sounding “Buddha bowls.” But no matter what they’re dubbed, we’ve concluded that they’re the ultimate healthy comfort food. What are they, exactly? Picture a mix of whole grains, like warm quinoa or wild rice, tossed with greens, such as shredded kale or organic arugula. Add in more veggies, such as roasted corn and peppers and fresh tomatoes. Next is the protein—think roasted chicken, or tofu, black beans, or a dollop of goat cheese and a sprinkling of sunflower seeds. Then it’s all tossed with a flavor-packed sauce or a splash of dressing, like pesto vinaigrette.

Bowl meals are “filling, and you get a mix of flavors and textures in every bite,” says Amy Keating, R.D., a CR dietitian. “Plus their ingredients tend to be what people think of as ‘power’ or ‘super’ foods, those they should be getting more of in their diet.” A modern twist on the whole-grain-based macrobiotic bowls popular in the 1960s, they had a revival when cutting-edge salad joints, like Sweetgreen, and fast casual restaurants with a health bent, like Chipotle, brought well-balanced meals-in-a-bowl to the masses. In fact, according to food-industry
consulting firm Technomic, bowl meal offerings on restaurant menus have increased by more than 30 percent over the past seven years.

It’s no wonder then that grain bowls are starting to pop up in the frozen food aisle, too, alongside lasagna, chicken stir-fry, and microwave-ready burritos. “Bowl mania really hit its stride this year, and frozen food manufacturers have taken notice,” says Consumer Reports’ nutritionist Ellen Klosz. “When we started exploring the supermarket options, we were surprised by how many there were, so we looked at the category to see just how healthy and tasty frozen grain bowls could be.”

Tracking a Tasty Trend
As many as two-thirds of grocery shoppers are looking for foods with fewer and simpler ingredients, according to market research firm Packaged Facts. “For the most part, grain bowls—even frozen ones—deliver on this front. The ones in our tests contained simple, recognizable ingredients, such as whole grains, vegetables, protein, and seasonings,” Klosz says. Several bowls were labeled vegan, meaning they contain no animal products whatsoever, and others were labeled organic, gluten-free, or non-GMO.

Bowl meals make it easy to get healthful foods into your diet. Whole grains, usually the base of bowl meals, have long been linked to improved heart health and decreased risk of diabetes. Newer research finds that subbing whole grains for refined ones, such as white rice or white bread, may help people manage their weight. This is achieved by speeding up metabolism and decreasing the number of calories the body holds on to during digestion—by as much as 100 calories per day, according to a Tufts University study published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.

Getting enough vegetables in one’s diet is a struggle for many consumers. “Many of these meals contained a serving of veggies—in many cases, different types than the typical broccoli—and every serving counts,” Keating says. In an analysis of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Side Dish With a Nutritional Kick</th>
<th>Frozen power bowls tend to contain more whole grains, vegetables, and legumes, plus a lot less sodium, says Amy Keating, R.D., a CR dietitian. We compared three of our top-rated power bowls with similarly flavored packaged grain dishes. The nutritional values are for about 1-cup servings of each, as prepared.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Luvo</strong></td>
<td><strong>Uncle Ben’s</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planted Power Bowl So Cal Kale &amp; Bean</td>
<td>Ready Whole Grain Medley Quinoa &amp; Brown Rice with Garlic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>150</td>
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<td>Fiber (g)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sugars (g)</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sodium (mg)</td>
<td>180</td>
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Rethinking Your Chicken Choices
Burrito, frozen bowl, or takeout bowl? Have a close look at the nutritional values before you stick a fork in it.

When you’re short on time or energy, takeout or a frozen meal can be a solution to the problem of getting a nutritious dinner on the table fast. But even healthy-sounding dishes with similar ingredients and approximately the same serving size can vary greatly in nutrition. We compared a frozen Mexican-style chicken power bowl with both a frozen chicken burrito and a chicken burrito bowl from a chain restaurant and found big differences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Red’s Organic Chicken, Cilantro &amp; Lime Burrito, 2 (9 oz.)</th>
<th>Smart Ones SmartMade Mexican-Style Chicken Bowl (9 oz.)</th>
<th>Qdoba Burrito Bowl (9.5 oz.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
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<td>Fat (g)</td>
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<td>Fiber (g)</td>
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<td>Fiber (g)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sugars (g)</td>
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<td>Sugars (g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium (mg)</td>
<td>940</td>
<td>Sodium (mg)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Made with: flour tortilla, chicken, brown rice, black beans, cheddar cheese, tomatillo, corn, red peppers

Made with: poblano peppers, black beans, red bell peppers, onions, corn, chicken, brown rice, Monterey Jack cheese, sauce

Made with: tequila lime chicken, cilantro lime rice, cilantro lime dressing, black bean/corn salsa, Cotija cheese

PHOTOS: JOHN WALSH; FOOD STYLING: MICHAEL PEDERSON AND MICHELLE GATTON
95 studies on the health benefits of fruit and vegetables published in the International Journal of Epidemiology, the biggest reduction in the risk of heart disease and stroke came from eating about 28 ounces of fruit and vegetables per day. But smaller amounts were protective, too: For every 7 ounces of produce eaten daily—equal to about a cup of cherry tomatoes and a large carrot—the drop in risk of developing these diseases ranged from 8 to 18 percent.

Though meat does serve as the protein source in some grain bowls, many feature plant-based proteins, such as beans or tofu. “Meat is increasingly becoming a side dish or a condiment in meals, rather than the main event,” Keating says. And for those who need some convincing, bowl meals may make a plant-based dinner more palatable. One-third of the U.S. population says it would like to eat less meat, according to Truven Health Analytics, a market research firm. But on a plate, a small (or nonexistent) serving of meat next to a pile of produce and grains may not look so enticing. Mix the same foods in a bowl and add a sauce, and the divergence from the standard “meat, potatoes, and veggie” feels less intimidating.

No More Fear of Frozen

Frozen meals don’t often get high marks for healthfulness or flavor. But in our tests of 26 power bowls, 15 received a high enough overall score—a combination of nutrition and taste ratings—to make our recommended list, and not one received lower than a Good overall score.

Seven of the bowls got Excellent ratings for nutrition, because they supplied at least a third of the daily value for fiber, contained less than 500 mg of sodium, and had little, if any, added sugars. In fact, a lower sodium count is one advantage that frozen grain bowls have over many traditional frozen dinners. Though it’s not hard to find frozen entrées with upward of 800 mg of sodium, only a handful of bowls in our tests topped 650 mg. “At $3.50 to $6.00 per meal, you’re getting a meal that’s healthier than a lot of the frozen fare on the market for about the same or a little more money,” Klosz says.

Healthfulness didn’t come at the expense of taste, however: Our team of professional tasters was actually surprised that some of the meals came from the freezer case. Despite their overall lower sodium content, none were described as bland. “Higher-quality ingredients in the top-rated bowls gave them plenty of flavor,” says Klosz, “and the majority of meals in this category were inspired by cuisines with strong flavor profiles, such as Asian, Indian, and Mexican.” What’s more, “the spices seemed fresh, not dehydrated,” she says. And in many of these dishes, the veggies weren’t mushy or waterlogged, which we’ve seen in other types of frozen meals.

Interestingly, the completely vegetarian or vegan meals, such as Amy’s Light & Lean Quinoa & Black Beans with Butternut Squash & Chard and Luvo Planted Power Bowl Great Karma Coconut Curry, were flavor favorites of our testers. By contrast, “gristly” or “dry and chewy” were comments they made about the meat and poultry in many of the dishes that contained those proteins.

The calorie counts of most of the frozen bowls in our tests were on the low side for a meal, hovering in the 250 to 300 range. That’s usually not the case with bowls at restaurants or the ones you make yourself at home. “It’s similar to salads. While grain bowls are healthful, you can get away with a lot of additional calories,” Keating. “If you include a lot of calorie-dense foods, like avocado, dressing, or nuts, or big portions of whole grains, it’s pretty easy to make a bowl that has 700 calories or more.” If your frozen bowl meal is smaller than you’d like, toss it on a bed of greens, like baby spinach or arugula, or top with some raw or steamed vegetables to bulk it up for just a few additional calories.

For more information on healthy foods and nutrition, check out our food and drink guide at CR.org/foods1017.
Ratings  Going Bowling With whole grains and veggies, power bowls—a new entry into the frozen food case—can be smart nutritional picks. Unless otherwise noted, meals are vegan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Overall Score</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Nutrition Information</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Flavor &amp; Texture Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amy's Light &amp; Lean Quinoa &amp; Black Beans with Butternut Squash &amp; Chard</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>8 240 5 0.5 10 38 11 6 440</td>
<td>$4.20</td>
<td>Quinoa with plentiful seasoned black beans, butternut squash, and some Swiss chard and carrots. Hints of garlic and ginger.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luvo Planted Power Bowl Great Karma Coconut Curry</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>10 330 15 5 10 45 9 5 390</td>
<td>$6.00</td>
<td>Indian-style vegetable and grain bowl with lots of vegetables, chickpeas (regular and green), and black lentils. Seasoned with a flavorful, fairly spicy curry sauce with a hint of sweetness and coconut.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Choice Simply Steamed Unwrapped Burrito Bowl</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>9 270 4 1 9 50 12 3 350</td>
<td>$4.00</td>
<td>Big spicy heat. Cilantro flavor comes through in this mix of rice, beans (pinto and black), and sweet, roasted corn. Tomatillo sauce gives it a slight citrusy taste.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kashi Chimichurri Quinoa Bowl</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>9 260 8 1.5 10 42 10 5 350</td>
<td>$4.00</td>
<td>Boldly flavored spicy mix of red quinoa, lentils, beans, potatoes, and vegetables in a tangy chimichurri-style sauce with vinegar note.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luvo Planted Power Bowl Mighty Masala &amp; Greens</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>10 300 13 3.5 11 41 9 5 390</td>
<td>$6.00</td>
<td>Indian-spiced grain vegetable bowl with brown rice, petite black lentils, and plentiful vegetables, including kale, green chickpeas, and red peppers. Fairly spicy overall, with moderate heat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luvo Planted Power Bowl So Cal! Kale &amp; Bean</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>10.25 300 7 0.5 10 53 11 14 360</td>
<td>$6.00</td>
<td>Unusual combination of ingredients—white and red beans, rice, mushrooms, kale, broccoli, raisins, and carrots. Red wine vinegar adds a tangy flavor. Slightly sweet with cumin and dried thyme. Has some heat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kashi Black Bean Mango Bowl</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>10 330 9 1 10 56 11 12 270</td>
<td>$4.00</td>
<td>Black beans, carrots, bell peppers, and lots of grains in this bowl. Sauce has more of a general sweet taste rather than tasting like mango. Diced jalapeno peppers that add pockets of heat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart Ones SmartMade Mexican-Style Chicken Bowl</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>9 260 5 2.5 21 33 6 6 530</td>
<td>$3.50</td>
<td>Mexican-style rice, black bean, and chicken bowl with smoky notes from roasted corn, and peppers, including poblanos. Balanced seasonings overall with hint of citrus lime. Chicken is better than in most others. Not vegan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kashi Sweet Potato Quinoa Bowl</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>9 300 8 1.5 9 50 7 9 440</td>
<td>$4.00</td>
<td>Flavorful combination with red quinoa, brown rice, sweet potatoes, black beans, roasted poblano peppers, kale, and caramelized red onion in a tomato base that is slightly sweet and tangy. Jalapenos add heat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet Earth Curry Tiger</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>9 370 20 11 15 35 8 9 450</td>
<td>$3.50</td>
<td>Indian-inspired curry spice blend with plentiful lentils, large broccoli pieces, sweet potato, and carrots. Spicy but not overpowering. You can tell the vegetables are frozen, and the seasoned seitan (wheat gluten) pieces are fairly chewy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart Ones SmartMade Orange Sesame Chicken Bowl</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>9 240 4.5 1 21 30 5 10 530</td>
<td>$3.50</td>
<td>Quinoa and veggie bowl with broccoli, red peppers, and snap peas in a sweet and sour sauce with a mild orange citrus flavor. Large chicken chunks are a bit dry. Not vegan. Mix of plentiful red beans, brown rice, broccoli, kale, and sweet potatoes that has an Asian flare with ginger and soy notes. Big bean flavor and slightly tangy. Also includes pumpkin seeds and sparse, heavily seasoned, slightly salty tofu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy's Bowls Harvest Casserole</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>10 320 10 1.5 13 44 7 8 650</td>
<td>$4.00</td>
<td>Mediterranean-style bowl with strips of chicken, quinoa, chickpeas, kale, and artichokes, seasoned with onion, garlic, and dried oregano. Unique flavor profile. Has a tangy tomato sauce. Hints of feta. Texture of chicken pieces varied. Not vegan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart Ones SmartMade Mediterranean-Style Chicken Bowl</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>9 260 9 4 19 29 5 6 510</td>
<td>$3.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product</td>
<td>Overall Score</td>
<td>Rating</td>
<td>Nutrition Information</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td>Flavor &amp; Texture Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommended</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Luvo Bowl Chicken Harissa &amp; Chickpeas</strong></td>
<td>67</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Boldly flavored Indian-spiced dish with brown rice, broccoli, chickpeas, and other vegetables. Chicken pieces fall somewhat short: They’re on the dry and chewy side. Not vegan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sweet Earth Moroccan Tagine</strong></td>
<td>67</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Moroccan-style grain and vegetable bowl with seitan pieces, sweet potato, and chickpeas with moderate spicy heat. Flavorful and intensely seasoned but leaves a slightly bitter aftertaste.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evol Fire Grilled Steak</strong></td>
<td>65</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sweet Earth Bean &amp; Mango Cubano</strong></td>
<td>61</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Grain bits and ground white meat chicken with a pureed texture. Flavors of red and green pepper, garlic, onion, tomato, and dehydrated spices. Slight heat and slight fennel note. Not vegan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grainful Unstuffed Pepper</strong></td>
<td>61</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Smart Ones SmartMade Spicy Peanut Chicken &amp; Broccoli</strong></td>
<td>59</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Brown rice and vegetables (carrots, scart broccoli, and onions) in a mild peanut-flavored sauce with soy and spicy heat. Vegetables taste frozen and have a soft texture. Chicken pieces are grippy and flavor is off slightly. Not vegan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Smart Ones SmartMade Grilled Sesame Beef &amp; Broccoli</strong></td>
<td>59</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Beef with snow peas, broccoli, and roasted red peppers in a sauce with tomato, soy, onion, garlic, and slight heat. Some beef pieces are dry and chewy; others are tender. Not vegan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evol Sriracha Chicken</strong></td>
<td>57</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Big Sriracha heat in this ordinary mixture of plentiful brown rice, chicken, and veggies. Typical frozen vegetable texture. Includes snap peas, broccoli, and carrots. Chicken lacking a bit of freshness. Not vegan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evol Lean &amp; Fit Teriyaki Chicken</strong></td>
<td>57</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teriyaki chicken with brown rice and blend of snap peas, carrots, broccoli, and red and green peppers. Sweet sauce with soy. Not vegan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grainful Jambalaya</strong></td>
<td>54</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chewy, gritty sausage and grain bits in a pureed mix that tastes mostly of red peppers, garlic, and paprika. Spicy and hot with a big smoky flavor that overpowers a bit. Looks better than it tastes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Smart Ones SmartMade Mexican-Style Pulled Pork Bowl</strong></td>
<td>54</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mixture of rice, black beans, roasted corn, onions, peppers, and pork pieces. Sauce has tangy tomatillo flavor with a slight cheese note. Some meat pieces are fatty, and the flavor detracts. Pork is the weakest component. Not vegan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Healthy Choice Café Steamers Simply Chicken Fried Rice</strong></td>
<td>53</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Asian-seasoned tofu “stir-fry” with brown rice, broccoli, green beans, carrots, and scallions. You can tell the vegetables are frozen. Slightly sweet teriyaki seasoning with garlic and soy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Amy’s Bowls Teriyaki</strong></td>
<td>52</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HOW WE TEST:** CR’s nutrition and food-testing team rated power bowls for nutrition and taste. The Overall Score is a combination of the two. The Nutrition score is based on: energy density (calories per gram of food), total fat, saturated fat, fiber, sugars, sodium, and other nutrients. Extra weighting is given for influential nutrients, either positive or negative, respectively to the food. Taste ratings are based on the results of a blind tasting panel of trained sensory experts.
Does hiking taxes on sugary drinks work? We investigate.

The New War on Obesity

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MIKE MCQUADE
It seems like a simple solution: To curb the obesity problem, make unhealthy foods more expensive and people will eat less of them.

Local governments around the country—including Philadelphia, San Francisco, Seattle, and Berkeley, Calif., among others—have started to do just that, enacting laws that tax sugar-sweetened drinks and sodas at a higher rate than other foods and beverages. Sugary drinks are a logical choice. They’re a major contributor to daily American calorie intake—roughly 7 percent of all calories consumed—while contributing little to no nutritional value. Consider that an average 20-ounce cola harbors about 16 teaspoons of added sugar.

These so-called behavior or sin taxes are among the newest weapons being deployed in the complex war to end America’s obesity crisis. The U.S. currently holds the unenviable title of most overweight nation on earth, with more than a third of citizens now considered obese. While a long-term fix to the nation’s obesity epidemic will require much more than just taxation, an in-depth look at early experiments shows promising results—particularly when taxes are targeted at soda and other sugar-heavy drinks.

“Taxation of sugary beverages and junk food is where we have the most solid evidence of an effect,” says Barry Popkin, Ph.D., an economist and professor of nutrition at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. “Overall, it reduces consumption, and particularly for lower-income people, who have a higher incidence of untreated diseases, such as hypertension, diabetes, and other chronic diseases related to excessive consumption of these foods.”

Some countries, such as Chile and Mexico, are way ahead of the U.S. in their sugary-beverage taxation programs. In its recent review of such initiatives, “Using Price Policies to Promote Healthier Diets,” the World Health Organization’s Regional Office for Europe found that such taxes led to a reduction in consumption proportionate to the tax applied, and in many cases demonstrated a reduction in calorie intake.

The New War on Obesity

Does hiking taxes on sugary drinks work? We investigate.
For instance, a 20 percent levy usually results in roughly a 20 percent usage reduction, according to the WHO review. This equation has proved fairly accurate in American cities that have already established the tax, and it’s exactly what happened in Berkeley, Calif., once a 1-cent-per-ounce levy took effect in 2015.

A recent nationally representative survey of 1,010 adults by Consumer Reports shows that while consumers have mixed feelings about sin taxes, among the 42 percent who favor them, the majority approve of taxing sugar-sweetened beverages.

Kayla Yee Mulern, a 21-year-old student in Philadelphia, says she’s for soda taxes, and not just because she’s not a soda drinker. “They’re going to get the money from somewhere,” Mulern says, “so it might as well be from something that might actually make the public make better health decisions.”

Why Focus on Soda?
Seemingly small increases in calories through the years have contributed to America’s current obesity epidemic, which suggests that relatively small adjustments could go a long way toward alleviating it.

The weight gain among Americans stems from what has been estimated to be an increase of roughly 300 calories a day over time, notes Philadelphia health commissioner Thomas Farley, M.D. “Take away one can of soda, which would be about 150 calories, and you’re halfway there to offsetting that,” he says.

To work well, he says, these efforts need to zero in on two groups—the young and the heaviest soda consumers. Those who are overweight in childhood tend to be overweight as adults, he explains.

And Popkin of UNC-Chapel Hill notes that while the average American consumes 150 calories from soda a day, 40 percent of the population consumes 300 to 800. “That’s the group we really want to focus on,” he says.

Not surprisingly, the soda industry opposes beverage taxes, and in recent years has tried to defeat city ballot initiatives to enact taxes, and when new laws do pass, challenge them in court. Industry representatives note that while the rate of obesity has risen in recent decades, overall consumption of sugary drinks in the U.S. has declined by about 27 percent since 1998—mainly as bottled water has gained as a popular alternative.

As these taxes are contemplated, the beverage industry is also responding to consumer concerns about sugar in its marketing. In July, Coca-Cola said that it would change the recipe of its popular Coke Zero product and rename it, now calling it Coca-Cola Zero Sugar in the U.S. market.

Lauren Kane, of the American Beverage Association, says of the targeted beverage taxes now dotting the country: “There is absolutely no proof out there that these things work.”

To be sure, targeted pricing efforts tied to health goals have traditionally had mixed results, research shows. It’s not that such strategies never work, but that they tend to require a lot of heavy lifting and market manipulation and battling with industry to achieve the intended results.

“It’s important to remember that in public health, there is very rarely a single intervention that works,” cautions Jim O’Hara of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, which, along with the WHO, strongly endorses sugar-sweetened-beverage taxes in combination with other measures to reduce consumption and prevent obesity for adults and, especially, children. “There has to be a multifaceted approach: education, policy, taxes, and industry behavior,” O’Hara says.

What We Learned From Cigarettes
Nearly everyone can agree on this: The long and robust campaign against tobacco use in the United States set the gold standard for a successful government health initiative.

The winning formula involved a combination of bold strategies, including high taxation, public education on the dangers of cigarette use, limits on advertising, and a long, grinding battle to restrict where tobacco can be sold and used. And the results have been striking: The smoking rate among American adults has dropped from about 42 percent in 1965 to 15 percent in 2015.

To get there, the financial disincentives for using tobacco have become extraordinarily high—in some places, such as New York City, taxes now add up to more than $5, or about half the cost of a pack of cigarettes. No less significant, though, is that starting in 1971 the tobacco industry grudgingly accepted tough restrictions and bans on advertising in an effort to head off even more draconian measures.

Devising ways to combat obesity, experts say, will require the same kind of enduring dedication and aggressive game plan used on tobacco.

The Carrot-and-Stick Approach
The WHO recommends a multipronged strategy that is part punishment, part reward—leveraging both consumer taxes...
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**The Carrot-and-Stick Approach**

The WHO recommends a multipronged strategy that is part punishment, part reward—leveraging both consumer taxes and public education. The carrot is education and increased consumption charges, while the stick is restrictions on advertising and other public education strategies. As a result, public health experts believe that the approach will encourage consumers to choose healthier beverages. 

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**The Healing Power of Water**

Our bodies are 60 percent water. It’s the main ingredient of our blood, which keeps our brain, heart, kidneys, and other organs functioning. How much do we need? Generally, men should aim for roughly 16 eight-ounce cups a day and women 11, though you may need a little more or less depending on your size, your activity level, and the weather. Just remember, water found in foods and all beverages counts toward the total. —Catherine Roberts

---

**Prevent a Headache**

Dehydration can trigger headaches—and drinking up can sometimes help cure one.

**Pamper Your Ticker**

Good hydration increases the volume of blood in your arteries, which means fewer heartbeats to transport blood around your body, so it’s less taxing on the heart muscle itself.

**Curb Appetite**

Drinking water before a meal can make you feel full without any calories and help prevent overeating.

**Healthy Flush**

Ample water helps ensure that your digestive tract has enough fluid to effectively eliminate waste.

**Boost Your Mood**

Experts aren’t exactly sure why, but research suggests that people who are well-hydrated tend to be in better moods.

**Keep Your Cool**

Staying hydrated helps you sweat more, which is essential for cooling down your body on hot days or after exercise, and can help you avoid heat stroke, too.

**Fight a Fever**

When you're sick with, say, the flu, drinking plenty of water can limit the rise of your body temperature, when taken in conjunction with fever-reducing medication.

**Up Your Game**

Hydrated runners tend to be faster than dehydrated ones, and feel better afterward, too, possibly because they eliminate lactic acid more quickly.

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and marketplace subsidies. It suggests subsidizing the cost of fruits and vegetables by 10 to 30 percent while taxing foods and beverages high in saturated fat, trans fat, added sugars, and sodium.

Bad-behavior levies would in effect pay to encourage better behaviors. The public will buy into the taxes, the WHO suggests, “if the revenue they generate is earmarked for efforts to improve health systems, encourage healthier diet, and increase physical activity.”

Results from CR’s survey also suggest that consumers would support that idea, with a large majority saying they’d respond favorably to the “carrot” encouragement approach: While half of Americans say they would not cut back on unhealthy food if it cost more, most (73 percent) say they would eat more healthy food if it cost less.

“It’s not acceptable to a lot of people to have their behavior controlled,” says Ajibade Animasaun, a 63-year-old cab driver in Philadelphia, where a 1.5-cents-per-ounce soda tax went into effect at the start of this year. “Yeah, you can tell me you are going to help me with my obesity problem,” Animasaun says, rhetorically, “but not by taxing me to death.”

While people say that they prefer subsidies to punishments, in many cases taxes have been found to work better. Research shows that while a 20 percent tax generally reduces unhealthy behavior by 20 percent, a 20 percent subsidy improves healthy behavior by only 10 percent.

Programs that encourage healthy changes are much less prevalent than those that tax unhealthy habits.

In 2014, Congress earmarked $100 million for a program that would increase the value of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits—what used to be called food stamps—when they are used to buy fruits and vegetables.

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**Just Say No to Soda: Make These Smart Swaps Instead**

If you drink a 20-ounce sugary cola every day for a year you’ll consume 119 cups of sugar and 87,600 calories. Replace that soda with one of these options to drink yourself healthier, cutting your sugar intake and your weight.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beverage</th>
<th>Cups of sugar you would eliminate per year</th>
<th>Pounds of body weight you could lose per year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Water</strong></td>
<td>119 cups</td>
<td>14 pounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Milk</strong></td>
<td>97 cups</td>
<td>6.5 pounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dunkin’ Donuts Iced Coffee</strong></td>
<td>84 cups</td>
<td>9 pounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Honest Lemon Tea</strong></td>
<td>80 cups</td>
<td>9.5 pounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gatorade</strong></td>
<td>57 cups</td>
<td>6 pounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tropicana Orange Juice</strong></td>
<td>47 cups</td>
<td>3 pounds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Water** is the best option in that it does wonders for the daily workings of your whole body while contributing 0 calories. Ounce for ounce, reduced-fat 2 percent milk has more calories than soda, in part because it has protein, fat, and naturally occurring sugar. But going with an 8-ounce carton spares you about half the calories while providing calcium, protein, potassium, and vitamin D.

Yes, you’re eliminating some sugar, but you’re replacing one sugary, caffeinated beverage for another. If you love coffee, add the sugar yourself, sparingly. This brand of iced tea contains less added sugar than some other popular brands but still packs about 5 teaspoons of sugars per bottle. A better bet: Brew your own and add less sugar.

Like milk, pure fruit juice offers vitamins and minerals—but also contains more natural sugar, upping its calorie count. Instead, drink water and eat a whole piece of fruit, for the filling and healthy fiber.

*Source: These results are based on the average-sized American adult (male and female); calculations are from the National Institutes of Health Body Weight Planner, using typical servings sizes for each beverage.*
The U.S. Department of Agriculture, which added $16.7 million in funding last fall, characterizes it as a success. And a recent survey of SNAP shoppers at seven farmers markets in the program found that 74 to 94 percent of them had increased either their purchase or consumption of fruits and vegetables. It is not clear whether Congress or the Trump administration will renew the program when it ends in 2018.

While applauding the intent, Popkin worries that such initiatives don’t address the overwhelming prevalence of junk food in the American marketplace, particularly in the diets of children and adolescents. “Going from two to three servings of fruits and vegetables to three-and-a-half servings doesn’t do a lot,” he says, “when you’re also consuming a lot of chips and soft drinks and other junk food.”

Why Consumer Choice Matters
These kinds of behavior taxes and consumer educational efforts have been around for decades and tried, with mixed results, on everything including cigarettes, alcohol, gasoline, fatty foods, and garbage—the latter to encourage recycling.

For example, Denmark tried to tax foods high in saturated fat several years back, but noticed its citizens were simply crossing national borders to load up on their Danish pastry and other gooey delights. So the tax was removed.

And in 2008, New York City rolled out a nutritional content program requiring calorie counts to be posted on menus at fast-food and large chain restaurants. But researchers found that this public awareness effort did almost nothing to steer customers toward healthier alternatives.

In Philadelphia, there was little public support for a soda tax until city officials promised that its millions in projected revenue would go toward funding pre-kindergarten programs.

It will take years, experts say, to determine whether a reduction in soda consumption leads to a corresponding improvement in the health of the community. What’s clear on both a national and individual level is that reducing soda intake won’t help much if people replace sugar-added beverages with other high-calorie options.

“If you got rid of the 7 percent of calories consumed through soda, would that be enough to affect weight?” asks Jason Fletcher, Ph.D., a professor of public affairs and applied economics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, who has studied the issue. “The answer is yes, if you take all those calories and just remove them from your diet.” But, he says, “If you substitute those beverages with other high-calorie drinks, then you haven’t reduced your calories at all.”

For example, if an average-sized American adult cut one typical cola from his daily diet and replaced it with a standard serving of orange juice, he’d get more vitamins. But over a year, he would lose only 3 pounds, according to calculations from the National Institutes of Health Body Weight Planner.

If, instead, he substituted water for the large cola, that simple swap would help him lose about 14 pounds and eliminate 52 pounds of added sugars a year from his diet. (See “Just Say No to Soda: Make These Smart Swaps Instead,” on page 52, for more.)

As Fletcher puts it, we might be asking a tax alone “to do too much work. There may not be a single policy of any sort that’s going to put a dent in the obesity epidemic.”

Lessons From Abroad
Chile has launched what is probably the most ambitious program anywhere. And with reason, given that more than 10 percent of the country’s children under the age of 5 are considered obese.

Its government went well beyond the 18 percent sugar-sweetened-beverage tax already in place on drinks containing a high percentage of sugar. Packaging for products that exceed the limit must bear a health warning label, and Chile now prohibits all advertising for those products aimed at children under 14.

Mexico, with one of the highest diabetes rates among industrialized nations, has instituted a similar program, and it is working. The country’s 1-peso-per-liter tax on sodas, roughly 10 percent of the cost, led to a 6 percent decrease in overall sales and a drop of nearly 12 percent among lower-income citizens.

Popkin of UNC-Chapel Hill has been advising Mexico on its robust campaign. He is hopeful that more progress can be made in the U.S., starting with beverage taxes. But to date, they are only being adopted piecemeal by more health-conscious communities, and the federal government has yet to take steps toward a national tax.

He has no illusions about achieving a quick fix without a multifaceted strategy and more buy-in from Americans. Despite government-sponsored education to encourage healthy eating, nationally the rate of diabetes and other chronic diseases has continued to climb and obesity levels have yet to decline. One-third of American children are overweight or obese as determined by body mass index.

“We’ll be the last country that will be dealing with obesity in a significant way,” Popkin says.

—Additional reporting by Catherine Roberts and Thomas Germain

Source: Consumer Reports’ nationally representative survey of 1,010 U.S. adults conducted in November 2016.
Road Report
Ratings from our test track plus expert car advice

Passing the Screen Test
Choosing the right infotainment system—for music, maps, and more—can mean the difference between a fun, smooth trip and a madly frustrating one. Our exclusive survey results will steer you to top picks.

by Mike Monticello
Just as the smartphone in your hand has become more capable—and more complicated—over the past few years, so have in-car infotainment systems. What is infotainment? It’s industry slang for a host of in-car features including music, navigation, phone integration, and voice recognition. And sophisticated digital interfaces are increasingly becoming standard issue in new cars.

“Consumers want cars that bring the communication and entertainment capabilities of their phones into their cars,” says Jake Fisher, director of auto testing at Consumer Reports. “And automakers are responding.”

Well-designed systems can execute multiple complex functions using natural speech (“call Mom on her cell phone”). Badly designed systems can turn those same interactions into a dangerous and confusing distraction.

Consumer Reports has been asking owners about their audio and infotainment systems in our Auto Satisfaction surveys in recent years. And these systems routinely rank as the least satisfying feature for most car owners in our survey. We crunched the numbers for the more than 82,000 vehicles in our latest survey, which includes 2013 through 2016 model years along with a few 2017s. Overall, only 44 percent of the infotainment systems were given a score of “very satisfied” by the subscribers who use them.

**Systems Owners Love**

Owners are enthusiastic about big touch screens, and carmakers are moving to make these displays larger and larger. Tesla owners currently get the biggest screens in the business—the Model S and Model X have massive 17-inch touch screens. In our survey, Tesla’s customers were the happiest with their infotainment system: 83 percent said they were very satisfied. Larger screens usually bring bigger, easier-to-read text and buttons, making it quicker to find the function you’re looking for. The owner of a 2014 Model S said, “The onscreen controls are intuitive, easy-to-use ... all cars’ entertainment systems should work this way!”

**Disappointing Duds**

Lexus’ Remote Touchpad is an example of an infotainment system that hinders drivers more than it helps: Just 26 percent said they were very satisfied. An owner of a 2015 Lexus NX called it “terrible,” adding, “difficult to operate, confusing, distracting. The infotainment system is a nightmare.”

Some manufacturers seem to have learned their lesson, improving their systems and turning drivers’ opinions around. Only 44 percent of drivers with MyFord/MyLincoln Touch, Ford’s earlier system, were very satisfied, but 70 percent of those using the new and improved Ford/Lincoln Sync 3 were very satisfied. It was a similar story for Audi and its latest MMI All-in-Touch system: 74 percent of owners said they were very satisfied compared with just 49 percent for the older version.

These systems aren’t perfect yet, by a long shot. Complicated, unintuitive layouts and those with touch-sensitive features continue to distract, causing drivers to take their eyes off the road.

**How to Shop Smarter**

If you’re in the market to buy a new car, take enough time at the dealership to get familiar with the infotainment system before you write that check. It will be time well-spent if it saves you from long-term frustration. Remember: A good infotainment system isn’t the reason to buy a car, but an annoying system is a really good reason to avoid one.
In-Dash Navigation

**What they offer now:** With GPS built into smartphones and many cars, it’s almost impossible to get truly lost anymore. Built-in navigation systems can give options and let you choose which route you’d like (for example, the quickest route or one that skips toll roads), and many provide real-time traffic information. Although each manufacturer’s system is different, screens typically run from 5 inches to more than 10 inches wide, and Tesla has a giant 17-inch touch screen. The systems are controlled by touch screens, knobs, touchpads, voice commands, or a combination of these technologies. Of course, think twice before buying an in-car system, because your smartphone probably has a system that’s just as good and won’t cost you hundreds or thousands of dollars more. But for your phone to be a good alternative, it must integrate well into your infotainment system.

**CR’s take:** A good navigation system should allow you to set your route by simply saying the name of your destination, just as you can with your smartphone. Some systems let you program your destination by using an app before you get into the car. Real-time traffic capability is a must-have; your phone has it, and your in-car navigation should, too. A big, clear screen is important, as is the ability to access your music while also staying current with turns on the route. And you should have access to up-to-date maps without being charged a high price to keep them current, as some manufacturers do.

Navigation systems often falter when it’s difficult to input the destination, turn off the guidance instructions, or cancel the route. Of course, they’re at their worst when they direct you to the wrong place altogether. A bad system might entice the driver to use his phone instead, which can lead to more distracted driving.

**What owners say:** Tesla owners were by far the most effusive about their car’s navigation system, particularly praising the 17-inch screen and intuitive interface, saying such things as, “the easiest to use in-dash navigation of any manufacturer.” Audi buyers were also impressed, with one owner applauding the “amazing futuristic technology” in the car, including the ability to get
dramatic aerial views of areas from Google Earth and to put a large version of the navigation map directly in front of the driver, between the speedometer and tachometer.

Drivers get annoyed when they can’t input destinations easily. This was especially troubling for Mazda owners, with one saying, “The user interface for the navigation system is ridiculously slow,” and another saying, “The voice operation of the navigation is worthless.” Honda owners weren’t much happier, complaining that the HondaLink system was overly complicated, with one owner pointing to “menus, then submenus, and then submenus of the original submenus.” Other Honda owners said it was awkward and time-consuming to set a destination, with one suggesting that “the ability for users to key in the complete address at a single prompt would be a huge improvement.”

Lexus owners were unsparing in their distaste for the Remote Touchpad system, a small pad that’s located just forward of the cup holders between the front two seats. “The navigation is hard to use when trying to slide your finger on the pad,” one owner said. Another said the touchpad was so sensitive “that it’s almost unusable.”

**Audio Streaming**

**What they offer now:** In most cars, you can connect your phone or music device to your audio system using a USB cable, Bluetooth, or WiFi to stream music and podcasts or access music apps like Pandora and Spotify. Some vehicles, such as Teslas and Volvos, have onboard connections to directly stream into the car.

**CR’s take:** A good audio streaming system should allow you to access your music or internet streaming service without having to touch your phone. Well-designed systems let you navigate your music using steering-wheel controls, voice commands, or through a touch-screen display. Many systems automatically start playing music off your smartphone when you plug it in via USB merely to charge it, overriding the music source currently playing. One way around this is to use a 12-volt power cord with a dedicated USB port for phone charging.

**What owners say:** Even the highest score—Tesla’s 68 percent—isn’t all that high, which suggests that drivers weren’t overly enthusiastic with audio streaming. Comments from Tesla owners indicate they like the dependable streaming, listing “music on demand” as one of the car’s numerous highlights. Many Volkswagen owners praised their system’s Android Auto or Apple CarPlay compatibility, which enables them to access Spotify from their cell phones without touching the phone itself.

Cadillac’s Cue and Chrysler’s Uconnect (with the smaller 4.2-inch screen) tied for last, with just 36 percent of owners saying they were very satisfied. Cadillac owners focused most of their scorn on Cue as a whole, calling it “terrible,” “abominable,” and generally unintuitive. Some Chevrolet owners said that sometimes the audio disconnects Bluetooth “or doesn’t connect to begin with,” as one said. Other Chevrolet owners said the MyLink system makes playing music from phones confusing.
Bluetooth Phone Calling

**What they offer now:** Most new vehicles allow you to wirelessly pair—or connect—your phone to your car’s audio system by using a Bluetooth system. Not only does this let you talk without handling the phone, but many systems will also display contacts, favorites, and recent calls.

**CR’s take:** The best systems allow you to make or accept phone calls without taking your eyes off the road or your hands off the wheel. The acid test for any Bluetooth system is that it consistently reconnects with your phone every time you get back in the car; failure to do so can be a source of major driver frustration.

Beyond that, the better systems let you dial by voice command and sync your phone contacts to the car, and some systems can even read text messages for you and let you reply using voice commands. These systems can vary quite a bit in terms of call quality. On the best ones, the person you’re talking with won’t even know you’re in your car.

What happens when people get frustrated with their Bluetooth system? They simply pick up their phone, defeating the whole hands-free concept.

**What owners say:** Bluetooth was the only feature that, on average, more than half of the owners said they were very satisfied with. So what makes for a good Bluetooth system? Some Ford owners said they were impressed with how quickly Sync 3 paired, with one saying, “Connecting to devices is simple and fast.” BMW also scored well, with an owner praising the iDrive Touch for its “easy-to-use Bluetooth phone integration.” Chrysler and Dodge owners also said the Uconnect system (with an 8.4-inch screen) made for easy hands-free connections.

Some people were bugged by a cumbersome pairing process and dropped calls. An Acura owner complained that the Bluetooth in the AcuraLink system was “very clumsy and takes a lot of time and patience to make work.” Another complained that Bluetooth “drops calls on an intermittent basis,” and constantly disconnected phones. And some Subaru owners had complaints with the Starlink system, including connection inconsistency and poor sound quality. One owner summed up the feeling of many by saying, “Almost everyone complains they can’t understand me while on [my] hands-free phone.”

Voice Commands

**What they offer now:** Voice commands attempt to let you perform tasks while keeping your eyes on the road and your hands on the wheel. But this functionality tends to be hit or miss. When the systems don’t understand what you’re saying or take a long time to process, it can cause distraction leading to lots of frustration, as seen by the abysmal satisfaction scores in our survey.

“While voice commands allow drivers to keep their eyes on the road and hands on the wheel,” says Jake Fisher, CR’s director of auto testing, “if the system doesn’t immediately understand your command, it can still be a frustrating, lengthy, and distracting process.”

**CR’s take:** The systems that do it right don’t make you memorize special commands. Some systems work as well as today’s Road Report

Most Satisfying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>Brand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>Tesla</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>Audi MMI All-in-Touch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>Ford/Lincoln Sync 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>BMW iDrive Touch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>Chrysler Uconnect 8.4-inch screen version</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Least Satisfying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>Brand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Mazda Connect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Infiniti InTouch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Subaru Starlink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Chrysler Uconnect 4.2-inch screen version</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>AcuraLink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>HondaLink</td>
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Very Satisfied for all brands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>Brand</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Low avg.

100%

0%
Voice Commands

What they offer now: Voice commands attempt to let you perform tasks while keeping your eyes on the road and your hands on the wheel. But this functionality tends to be hit or miss. When the systems don’t understand what you’re saying or take a long time to process, it can cause distraction leading to lots of frustration, as seen by the abysmal satisfaction scores in our survey. “While voice commands allow drivers to keep their eyes on the road and hands on the wheel,” says Jake Fisher, CR’s director of auto testing, “if the system doesn’t immediately understand your command, it can still be a frustrating, lengthy, and distracting process.”

CR’s take: The systems that do it right don’t make you memorize special commands. Some systems work as well as today’s smartphones, interpreting your natural conversational speech. Voice commands can be very useful for making phone calls and setting destinations in a navigation system, but manufacturers shouldn’t intend them as a crutch to make up for poorly designed car functions.

What owners say: An average of only 28 percent of owners were very satisfied with voice-command systems. The top-rated Ford/Lincoln Sync 3 was lauded by certain subscribers for its ability to understand more common phrases. Others said that Sync 3 was very easy to use compared with the previous versions, and one owner said “the voice activation works very well.” Tesla’s system also rated comparatively high. One owner said, “Best feature: Voice control that’s responsive and works.”

Other voice-control systems had trouble understanding spoken commands, many survey respondents said. Several Acura owners lodged complaints (some filled with expletives), with one saying “the voice input system is incredibly frustrating and is more distracting than the keyboard.” Other owners complained that the system was easily affected by the climate system’s fan noise, and one owner simply gave up using the voice-command feature because “it does whatever it wants, no matter what you say.” Mini owners vented, too, about voice-control tech, using such words as “horrible” and “poor.”
### Ratings ➤ An Entertaining Experience

The most satisfying systems have big, clear screens; a straightforward command structure; and well-labeled, easy to use controls.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Brand Name</th>
<th>% Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Features</th>
<th>CR Expert Assessments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tesla 17-inch screen</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>A giant 17-inch touch screen controls everything. Has big onscreen buttons, clear graphics, quick responses, logical layout, capable internet radio music search. Caution: The eye-catching screen can be distracting, and there are no volume or tuning knobs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Audi MMI All-in-Touch</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>Almost everything can be done by steering-wheel controls; optional Virtual Cockpit puts info directly in front of you. While it has vivid graphics, it can be overwhelming at first, and Google Earth maps can be distracting. Available on redesigned A4, Q7, and newer models.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chrysler Uconnect with 8 4-inch screen</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Uses simple logic and good old-fashioned knobs and buttons. Has big onscreen text, icons. Screen is highly reflective, making fingerprints and smudges easy to see. Must use touch screen for functions such as heated seats and steering-wheel controls.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ford/Lincoln Sync 3</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Has large, well-labeled icons, streamlined touch-screen interface, quick responses, natural voice commands, large volume and tuning knobs. Screen is a long reach for shorter drivers in some models.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>BMW iDrive</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Has easy-to-read screen with large text, quick input responses, effective controller knob. Takes time to master; optional touchpad isn’t very helpful.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Volvo Sensus Connect Touch</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Quick response to inputs and crisp graphics. The large touch screen can be difficult to operate. Swipe and tap commands are confusing and require lots of familiarity; lots of small text. Buggy smartphone integration. Available on XC90, S90, and redesigned XC60.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Buick/Chevrolet/GMC</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Has intuitive screens, large text, traditional knobs and buttons, comprehensive steering-wheel controls. Swiping motions are difficult while driving; smaller-screen version offers a less versatile interface.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Keep Safety in the Driver’s Seat

**CR is critical of systems that force drivers to take their hands off the wheel or their eyes off the road.**

While infotainment systems offer drivers plenty of cool, interactive features, job No. 1 remains safely piloting the vehicle. “A well-designed car should allow the driver access to the tech they need with minimal distraction,” says Jake Fisher, director of auto testing at Consumer Reports. “Unfortunately, some systems can be frustrating to use and take too much attention away from driving.” Here are the biggest concerns that CR has about these systems:

- **Features can encourage drivers to take their eyes off the road.** Taking your eyes off the road for 5 seconds at 55 mph is like driving the length of an entire football field with your eyes closed. Multilayered interfaces can require drivers to tap screens repeatedly to dig down to submenus. The systems make it easy for an automaker to save space, but they make drivers divert attention to turn on the A/C or change the audio source. Using Volvo’s touch-screen system, a driver has to touch the screen at least twice to turn the A/C on and off.

- **Touch-sensitive controls may be unreliable.** The Cadillac Cue system, for example, often requires hitting the same button several times before the driver is sure the command has been received. Using the Lexus Remote Touch, drivers must carefully move the mouse to hit onscreen icons, and the normal movement of a car in motion makes that very difficult. That’s not only frustrating but often forces drivers to look away to make sure they’ve hit the right spot.

- **They can be visually distracting.** Big screens are a growing trend, and owners love them, but they can have lots going on. For example, some systems have navigation maps that can be “pinched” to zoom in and out like on a smartphone, or they have multiple screens that need to be swiped over to reach the correct submenu.
### Brand Name
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>% Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Features</th>
<th>CR Expert Assessments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Volkswagen MIB 2</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Offers seamless phone pairing, handy knobs and buttons for basic functions. Navigation graphics and voice commands aren’t the most refined, automatically responding touch screen can be tricky to use. Available on most 2015-17 models.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Audi MMI Touch</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Has central controller, buttons, and handwriting recognition, plus well-designed steering-wheel controls and lots of features. Complex to learn but intuitive once mastered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Lexus Remote Touch</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Has good steering-wheel shortcuts. The mouselike joystick controller is fussy, and it’s a challenge to move the cursor through onscreen choices, especially when driving.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Mercedes-Benz Comand</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>It lacks knobs and buttons, and the overly involved menus are distracting to use while driving. Touchpad controls on newest versions are too sensitive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Kia Uvo</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Has traditional knobs and buttons plus a touch screen with a logical system structure. Scrolling through phone contacts takes too many steps; small screens in base models aren’t user-friendly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Ford/Lincoln MyFord Touch/MyLincoln Touch</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Has a cluttered and unintuitive screen, flush buttons are overly “touchy.” Often buggy, with annoying reboots required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Mazda Mazda Connect</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Even simple functions require multiple steps, touch screen works only when vehicle is stopped, poor voice recognition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Chrysler/Dodge/Jeep Uconnect 4.2-inch screen</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>The diminutive screen requires smaller text; less usable or capable than 8.4-inch system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Cadillac Cue</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Has a confusing interface, sluggish response, and overly sensitive touch buttons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Mini Mini Connected</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Requires a learning curve. Voice commands process quickly but require preset commands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Volvo Sensus Connect</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Has familiar-looking radio knobs, and buttons control screen. Menus aren’t logical or easy to use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Honda HondaLink</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Unintuitive onscreen buttons and menus, poor voice-command quality, confusing dual-screen setup. High-trim systems lack volume and tuning knobs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Nissan NissanConnect</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Has simple knobs and buttons, good text size, quick navigation-route processing. Cumbersome phone pairing and setup.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Toyota Entune</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Has a logical screen structure, but touch-screen buttons are packed tightly together. Has lackluster voice-command system; forces users to install smartphone app to use additional functions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Infiniti Infiniti InTouch</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Two screens make it easy to see lots of information. Slow startup, complicated menu and control structure. Many tasks require multiple screen taps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Subaru Starlink</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Has easy-to-understand menus. Some onscreen buttons are small and crammed together; few steering-wheel controls; glossy screen reflects sunlight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Acura AcuraLink</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Has large text; phones pair easily. Frustrating dual-screen setup, convoluted display logic, finicky voice-command system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Lexus Remote Touchpad</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Large text, logical system structure. Console-mounted touchpad requires deft touch to make selections. Volume, tuning knobs hidden under ledge; universe of accepted voice commands is limited.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How We Survey:** Our infotainment survey data are based on the 2016 Auto Satisfaction Survey, conducted by the Consumer Reports Survey Department. We asked CR subscribers: “Considering all factors (features, usability, reliability, enjoyment, etc.), how satisfied are you with the infotainment system in your car?” Scores were determined based on the percentage of owners who said they were “very satisfied” with respect to the systems overall and on the four features. We received responses on more than 82,000 vehicles for model years from 2013 through 2016 as well as some 2017 models. We also provide CR assessments based on our vehicle-testing experience. These rated systems were the 25 most commonly purchased ones in our survey among the newer models. We don’t have sufficient data on some systems, such as those from Hyundai, Jaguar, and Land Rover. To learn more about owner satisfaction, go to CR.org/reliability.
Road Test

We conduct more than 50 tests on each vehicle at our 327-acre Auto Test Center. For complete road tests, go to CR.org/cars.

Hydrogen-Powered Hipness

The Toyota Mirai has a long range for an EV, but access to filling stations outside of California could limit its travel.

TOYOTA’S MIRAI is proof that hydrogen fuel-cell vehicles are a viable transportation option—but not yet for widespread use. The Mirai’s primary advantage is that it’s an all-electric car that doesn’t suffer from typical electric-vehicle limitations. It uses hydrogen as fuel, which is converted into electricity to power the car. The Mirai takes just a few minutes to refill rather than the hours to recharge a conventional EV. And the Mirai’s 275-mile range exceeds most EVs by a wide margin. Even better: The only tailpipe emission is water vapor.

But the hydrogen-fuel infrastructure is very limited outside of California. Toyota will cover fuel costs for three years or up to $15,000, whichever comes first. The government estimates annual fuel cost at $1,250 for 15,000 miles, about twice the gas cost for a Toyota Prius.

On the road, the 4,100-pound Mirai has sluggish acceleration and leans into turns, a sensation made more extreme by its tall stance.

The ride, however, is almost luxury-car plush, effectively smothing any bumps in the road. Outside noise is kept to a minimum. Despite the unconventional layout, most controls work intuitively.

Be warned, however: This sedan fits only four adults, and those in the rear must contend with limited legroom, short seats, and jammed-up toes. Forward-collision warning and automatic emergency braking come standard.

Like a Bus, But Better

With tons of room and an appealing driving experience, the Volkswagen Atlas is an enjoyable world traveler.

WITH THE ATLAS, Volkswagen finally has a three-row SUV designed with the qualities that American buyers crave.

Many consumers like big SUVs, and the Atlas is just that, inside and out. In daily driving, the 3.6-liter V6 and smooth 8-speed automatic feel lively. But the SUV’s heft slowed it down in our 0-to-60 mph test, falling short of its competitors.

Fuel economy of 20 mpg overall is on par for the class.

The Atlas doesn’t possess VW’s typical sporty character, because that isn’t a priority for most buyers in this category. Still, this expansive SUV is capable when the road becomes twisty. It delivers a driving experience that’s more engaging than the Honda Pilot or Toyota Highlander.

The Atlas offers a comfortable ride as it smoothly soaks up road imperfections. The cabin is as quiet as a school library during spring break.

The roomy interior has clear appeal, particularly its generous second- and third-row seats. Inside the cabin, you can access the wayback via a slickly articulating seat— with one hand, you can pull a lever and effortlessly pivot the second-row seat forward, opening up a wide access path.

Honda and Toyota, take note: These VW controls are a model of clarity, particularly the intuitive touch-screen infotainment system.

Advanced safety features including forward-collision warning and automatic emergency braking are available starting with the SE trim.

PLUG-IN HYBRIDS & ELECTRICS

Toyota Mirai

| OVERALL SCORE | 63 |
| ROAD-TEST SCORE | 61 |
| HIGHS | Long range for an EV, relatively quick fill-ups, ride comfort, standard AEB, emits only water vapor |
| LOWS | Only seats four, clumsy handling, limited hydrogen infrastructure, cargo space |
| POWERTRAIN | 153-hp electric, 1-speed direct drive, front-wheel drive |
| FUEL RANGE | 275 miles per tank |
| PRICE AS TESTED | $58,335 |

Volkswagen Atlas

| OVERALL SCORE | 71 |
| ROAD-TEST SCORE | 84 |
| HIGHS | Accommodations, third-row seat comfort and access, nimble than size suggests, comfortable ride, quiet cabin, easy-to-use controls |
| LOWS | Acceleration trails competitors, spotty Volkswagen reliability |
| POWERTRAIN | 276-hp, 3.6-liter V6 engine; 8-speed automatic transmission; all-wheel drive |
| FUEL | 20 mpg |
| PRICE AS TESTED | $44,165 |
A Frugal Family-Friendly Ride

The first hybrid minivan, the Chrysler Pacifica Hybrid is the most efficient model in the segment. But it’s hurt by Chrysler’s below-average reliability record.

The 2018 Odyssey’s redesign isn’t revolutionary, yet Honda made big improvements to its power, fuel economy, ride, and cabin quietness. It offers more features to pamper travelers and keep them connected. The overall result is a premium feel, especially for a minivan.

Inside, passengers will find the front seats large and inviting, but the bottom cushion loses firmness over long trips. By removing the second-row center seat, the comfortable outboard seats can be shifted inward. This puts children closer to their parents, and it opens a wider path to access the roomy third-row seats.

Most trims get a new infotainment system that has colorful graphics, easy customization, and app connectivity, among other features.

On the less user-friendly side, the gear selector’s buttons are awkward to use, particularly when switching between Drive and Reverse while parking.

The ride approaches luxury levels of comfort, and the cabin is serene except over very coarse pavement. It’s no longer the sportiest minivan; handling is mundane but secure.

The strong V6 engine provides plenty of power, and fuel economy of 22 mpg overall is commendable. The nine-speed automatic is merely adequate, but the 10-speed on the Touring and Elite trims shifts more smoothly.

Automatic emergency braking and other advanced safety systems are standard on the EX trim and above.

The Uconnect infotainment system, with an 8.4-inch screen, is one of the best around.

The minivan is full of features a family will appreciate and is loaded with storage bins, easy-to-access seating, and plenty of cup holders.

But the hybrid version has seating only for seven vs. eight in the conventional version. In addition, the hybrid is missing Chrysler’s handy Stow ‘n Go feature, which means the second-row seats don’t fold into the floor. (That space is taken up by the hybrid’s battery pack.) Instead, you get two fixed seats with extra padding that are more comfortable. There’s a deep well behind the third row, which can easily swallow the bags from a large grocery run or an after-school activity carpool.

Advanced safety features, such as forward-collision warning and automatic emergency braking, are available only on the top-trim version.

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Family-Friendly Haulers Three-row SUVs can carry your gear and offer all-wheel drive, but nothing beats a minivan’s flexibility. Plug-in hybrids and electric cars are becoming more practical with every generation.

### MINIVANS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Make &amp; Model</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Overall Score</th>
<th>Safety</th>
<th>Road-Test Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RECOMMENDED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toyota Sienna XLE</td>
<td>$38,424</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>Opt.</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RECOMMENDED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honda Odyssey EX-L</td>
<td>$40,300</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Opt.</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RECOMMENDED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chrysler Pacifica</td>
<td>$48,380</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>Opt.</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RECOMMENDED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kia Sedona EX</td>
<td>$34,795</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Opt.</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RECOMMENDED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chrysler Pacifica Touring L</td>
<td>$38,245</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>Opt.</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3-ROW SUVs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Make &amp; Model</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Overall Score</th>
<th>Safety</th>
<th>Road-Test Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RECOMMENDED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toyota Highlander XLE (V6)</td>
<td>$41,169</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>Std.</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RECOMMENDED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kia Sorento EX (V6)</td>
<td>$37,915</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>Opt.</td>
<td>84</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>RECOMMENDED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyundai Santa Fe SE (V6)</td>
<td>$36,290</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>Opt.</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RECOMMENDED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honda Pilot EX-L</td>
<td>$39,585</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Opt.</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RECOMMENDED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazda CX-9 Touring</td>
<td>$40,470</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>Opt.</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RECOMMENDED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volkswagen Atlas SEL (V6)</td>
<td>$44,165</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>Opt.</td>
<td>84</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>RECOMMENDED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dodge Durango GT (V6)</td>
<td>$43,525</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Opt.</td>
<td>83</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>RECOMMENDED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford Explorer XLT (V6)</td>
<td>$39,275</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Opt.</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RECOMMENDED</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nissan Pathfinder SL</td>
<td>$40,470</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Opt.</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PLUG-IN HYBRIDS and ELECTRIC CARS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Make &amp; Model</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Overall Score</th>
<th>Safety</th>
<th>Road-Test Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>RECOMMENDED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toyota Prius Prime</td>
<td>$29,889</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>Std.</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RECOMMENDED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford C-Max Energi</td>
<td>$34,940</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RECOMMENDED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMW i3 Giga REx</td>
<td>$50,450</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>Opt.</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RECOMMENDED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevrolet Bolt Premier</td>
<td>$43,155</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Opt.</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RECOMMENDED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toyota Mirai</td>
<td>$58,335</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Std.</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RECOMMENDED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chevrolet Volt LT</td>
<td>$35,890</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Opt.</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RECOMMENDED</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford Focus Electric</td>
<td>$40,990</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HOW WE TEST:** Recommended models did well in our Overall Score, which factors in Road-Test Results, Predicted Reliability, Owner Satisfaction, and Safety, which includes crash-test results and the availability of Front-Crash Prevention features, such as forward-collision warning and automatic emergency braking at city or highway speeds. For these systems, NA means no such system is offered. Opt. means it’s available on some versions but not necessarily on the one we tested; and models with standard systems are rated from ◆ to ◆◆◆ based on how many of these features are standard. We now deduct points from the Overall Score if a vehicle’s shifter is confusing, lacks fail-safes, or is difficult to operate. For full ratings, go to CR.org/cars.
Selling It

**Fall Fumbles**

These colorful mix-ups really put the "um ..." in autumn

---

**Fruitless Endeavor**
Someone please tell Kroger that apples grow on trees—not on strawberry plants.
Mary Carter, Miamisburg, Ohio

---

**One-Womb Schoolhouse**
It seems as though kids are starting school younger and younger these days.
Keral Fell, Beverly, Ohio

---

**Flesh Direct**
This strange smorgasbord offers more than we can stomach.
Linda Johnson, Alexandria, Va.

---

*Be on the lookout for goofs and glitches like these. Share them with us—by email at SellingIt@cro.consumer.org or by mail to Selling It, Consumer Reports, 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703—and we might publish yours. Please include key information, such as the publication’s name and date.*
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How to Use the Canada Extra Section

EVERY MONTH, Canada Extra provides Canadian pricing and availability information about products tested for that issue. The ratings in this section are based on this month’s reports, but they narrow your choices to the products that are sold in Canada.

You can use this section in either of two ways: Start with the main report, read about the products that interest you, and turn to this section to find whether they’re sold—and for what price—in Canada. Or start here, find products sold in Canada whose price and overall score appear promising, and read more about them in the main report and full ratings chart; page numbers appear with each Canadian report. (For some products, the Canadian model designation differs slightly from the one used in the U.S.)

In most cases, the prices we list here are the approximate retail in Canadian dollars; manufacturers’ list prices are indicated by an asterisk (*). The symbols shown at right identify CR Best Buys or recommended products in the U.S. ratings. “NA” in a chart means that information wasn’t available from the manufacturer. We include, in the Contact Info list on page 34d, the manufacturer’s web address in Canada so that you can go online to get information on a model you can’t find in the stores. (Many products that aren’t available in Canadian stores can be bought online.)

We appreciate your support, but we don’t take it for granted. Please write to CanadaExtra@cu.consumer.org and tell us what you think. We can’t reply to every email or implement every suggestion, but with your help we’ll try to keep growing to serve your needs.

$ CR Best Buy
Recommended models that offer the best combination of performance and price.

★ Recommended
Models that perform well and stand out for reasons we note.

Dishwashers

Ten of the tested dishwashers are available, including 2 of the recommended models. Report and ratings, pages 20-26

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand &amp; Model</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Overall Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommended</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frigidaire Gallery FGI2479SF</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GE Profile PDF8205SSJSS</td>
<td>$1,350</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KitchenAid KDTM354DSS</td>
<td>$1,350</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KitchenAid KDTM704ESS</td>
<td>$1,850</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KitchenAid KDTM104ESS</td>
<td>$1,360</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LG LDF8874ST</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LG LDFF9065BD</td>
<td>$1,100</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samsung DW80K7050US</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samsung DW80M9550US</td>
<td>$1,200</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whirlpool WDT9720PDM</td>
<td>$750</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Online subscribers can go to CR.org/dishwashers for complete up-to-date ratings.
### Ranges
Fifteen of the tested ranges are available. All are recommended models. Report and ratings, pages 20-26

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Brand &amp; Model</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Overall Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Samsung NE58F9710WS</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Samsung NE59J7850WS</td>
<td>$1,800</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>LG LDE4415ST</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Frigidaire Gallery CGEF3035RF</td>
<td>$1,300</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>GE Cafe CBC980STSS</td>
<td>$3,050</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Samsung NE58F9500SS</td>
<td>$1,800</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Samsung NE58H5600SS</td>
<td>$1,200</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Frigidaire Gallery FGGF3058RF</td>
<td>$1,400</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>GE PCG59205EFS</td>
<td>$1,900</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>LG LDG5315ST</td>
<td>$2,900</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>GE PCGB992EJSS</td>
<td>$2,750</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Samsung NY58J9850WS (dual-fuel)</td>
<td>$3,400</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Samsung RX58H9500WS</td>
<td>$2,200</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Samsung NE58H9450SS</td>
<td>$2,300</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>LG LFXS30766S</td>
<td>$4,200</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Whirlpool WRF995FIF</td>
<td>$2,050</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Whirlpool WRF532SMB</td>
<td>$2,050</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Frigidaire Gallery FGHB2866PF</td>
<td>$2,300</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>GE GNE29GSKSS</td>
<td>$3,400</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>GE Café CYE22TSHSS</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Kenmore 7200[2]</td>
<td>$1,850</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Refrigerators
Nine of the tested refrigerators are available. Report and ratings, pages 20-26

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Brand &amp; Model</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Overall Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Frigidaire Gallery FGHB2866PF</td>
<td>$2,300</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>GE GNE29GSKSS</td>
<td>$3,400</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>GE Café CYE22TSHSS</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kenmore 7200[2]</td>
<td>$1,850</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>LG LFXS30766S</td>
<td>$4,200</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Whirlpool WRF995FIF</td>
<td>$2,050</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Whirlpool WRF532SMB</td>
<td>$2,050</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Samsung NY58J9850WS (dual-fuel)</td>
<td>$3,400</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Samsung RX58H9500WS</td>
<td>$2,200</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Samsung NE58H9450SS</td>
<td>$2,300</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>LG LFXS30766S</td>
<td>$4,200</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Whirlpool WRF995FIF</td>
<td>$2,050</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Whirlpool WRF532SMB</td>
<td>$2,050</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Frigidaire Gallery FGHB2866PF</td>
<td>$2,300</td>
<td>71</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>GE GNE29GSKSS</td>
<td>$3,400</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>GE Café CYE22TSHSS</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Kenmore 7200[2]</td>
<td>$1,850</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Online subscribers can go to CR.org/ranges for complete up-to-date ratings.
# Autos

All of the tested vehicles are available in Canada.

Report and ratings, pages 62-64

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Make &amp; Model</th>
<th>Price Range</th>
<th>Acceleration (Sec.)</th>
<th>Fuel Economy (Liters per 100 km)</th>
<th>Electric Efficiency (Liters per 100 km)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0-50 km/h</td>
<td>0-100 km/h</td>
<td>80-100 km/h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-ROW SUVs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volkswagen Atlas</td>
<td>$35,690–$52,540</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINIVANS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honda Odyssey</td>
<td>$34,890–$50,290</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chrysler Pacifica Hybrid</td>
<td>$52,495–$56,495</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLUG-IN HYBRIDS AND ELECTRIC CARS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toyota Mirai</td>
<td>Available soon in Canada</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**VOLKSWAGEN ATLAS**  
PRICE AS TESTED  
$44,165 (U.S.)  
OVERALL SCORE  
71

**HONDA ODYSSEY**  
PRICE AS TESTED  
$40,300 (U.S.)  
OVERALL SCORE  
77

**CHRYSLER PACIFICA HYBRID**  
PRICE AS TESTED  
$48,380 (U.S.)  
OVERALL SCORE  
68

**TOYOTA MIRAI**  
PRICE AS TESTED  
$58,335 (U.S.)  
OVERALL SCORE  
63

---

Online subscribers can go to CR.org/refrigerators for complete up-to-date ratings.
Canada Extra

**RECALLS**

2007-2012 Nissan Versa
On certain vehicles, long-term exposure to high absolute humidity and temperature, combined with high temperature cycling, could degrade the propellant in the driver frontal airbag, causing the airbag to deploy with more force than normal. Fragments could be propelled toward vehicle occupants, and the airbag assembly could be damaged, preventing proper function.
**AFFECTED** 111,411 vehicles.
**WHAT TO DO** Dealers will replace the driver frontal airbag inflator.


2007-2013 Mitsubishi Outlander
On certain vehicles, water may drain from the windshield cowl area and potentially collect in the area of the wiper motor breathing hole. Water could potentially enter the wiper motor through the breathing hole and, over time, result in corrosion and/or an electrical conduction failure, both of which could cause the wiper motor to become inoperable.
**AFFECTED** 42,283 vehicles.
**WHAT TO DO** Dealers will replace the wiper motor with an upgraded wiper motor that will prevent water intrusion.

2011-2014 Chrysler, Dodge, and Jeep models
On certain vehicles equipped with electro-hydraulic power steering, the alternator may fail suddenly. This could cause the engine to stall, as well as disable various vehicle safety systems. It could also cause a fire.
**WHAT TO DO** Dealers will inspect the part number on the alternator and replace the alternator as necessary.

**Note:** Only specific engine and alternator combinations are affected by this campaign.

2011-2015 Dodge Journey
On certain vehicles, an electrical short could occur in the steering wheel wiring harness, resulting in an inadvertent deployment of the driver frontal airbag.
**AFFECTED** 120,336 vehicles.
**WHAT TO DO** Dealers will inspect the steering wheel wiring and replace it as necessary. A protective covering will also be installed on the wiring harness.

2013-2016 Honda Accord
On certain vehicles, the case for the battery sensor may have been improperly manufactured with gaps that could allow the intrusion of moisture or road salt and result in corrosion to the sensor, which could cause an electrical short.
**AFFECTED** 51,995 vehicles.
**WHAT TO DO** Dealers will inspect and replace the battery sensor as necessary.

2016-2017 Audi Q3
Certain vehicles may not comply with the requirements of Canada Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (CMVSS) 108 - Lighting System and Retroreflective Devices. If the parking brake is used during emergency braking, the brake lights on the vehicle will not activate. Anyone following the vehicle would be unaware of the emergency braking that is taking place.
**AFFECTED** 5,449 vehicles.
**WHAT TO DO** Dealers will update vehicle software to correct the non-compliance.

2016-2018 Lexus, Scion, and Toyota models
On certain vehicles, the electrical power cords of some dealer-installed block heaters may have been improperly manufactured, causing the wires to contact each other, resulting in a short circuit.
**WHAT TO DO** Dealers will cut the plug end from the block heater to disable its operation as an interim measure until an appropriate remedy is found. As an alternative, the owners may choose to have the accessory engine block heater removed and receive a refund of the purchase price of the engine block heater.

**Contact Info**

How to reach manufacturers in Canada.

Frigidaire
frigidaire.ca

GE
gaeappliances.ca

Kenmore
Contact local Sears

KitchenAid
kitchenaid.ca

LG
lg.ca

Samsung
samsung.ca

Whirlpool
whirlpool.ca