

## National Nurses Week: No place like home for a visiting nurse



Every year from May 6 through 12 people celebrate National Nurses Week, a time set aside to recognize the men and women who have dedicated their lives to the field of nursing. Here in New York, home care nurses help their patients stay safe and healthy throughout their entire lives, from a child's first days to well into the golden years—and everything in between.

As a registered home care nurse working with the Visiting Nurse Service of New York, I am honored to count myself among the skilled clinicians who find unique ways to connect with patients and help them achieve the best quality of life possible. You might be surprised to learn about some of the ways home care nurses go above and beyond their standard “job descriptions” for their patients:

Teaching is Caring Too.

Diabetes, Arthritis, High Blood Pressure, Heart Health—as we age most of us will face challenges related to chronic illness that require lifestyle changes. One of the most important things that home care nurses do to help those they care

for is to educate them and their family caregivers about how to make dietary, fitness and medication changes safely. It helps to know why the changes are important, and it helps to have support as you work to make them part of your new wellness routine.

Tough as Nails and Grace Under Fire.

Home care nurses are on the phones and in and out of different settings day in and day out. They must quickly adapt to a variety of stressful situations. Whether it's dealing with an emergency surgery or quickly treating a grisly wound, nurses can be some of the toughest people you know. They'll help you keep your cool (and blood pressure under control) and are highly skilled at staying calm no matter what.

Care that Keeps on Giving.

While patients may only see their doctors for a quick visit in the office, home care nurses coordinate care with their patients on an ongoing basis to form trusting relationships that support their care. They monitor patients outside the office and can inform doctors about health changes to help them stay well and avoid unnecessary trips to the hospital or ER. Home care nurses also coordinate care with physical therapists, social workers, home health aides and other resources that the physician orders or approves.

Home is Where the Health Is.

By providing care right where someone lives, home care nurses help aging or homebound individuals stay rooted and engaged in their communities and live a safe and independent life for many years—avoiding the isolation and dependency that can develop in a nursing home. Whether it's a voice on the phone or a knock on the door, nurses know that home is where most people feel safe and connected to their community.

When You Need Us, We're There.

At some point in our lives, we all connect with a nurse. Maybe it's someone who was there when we were born, or gave birth to our own children. Maybe it's the steady skill of an RN who supervised care and helped us heal through a little laughter or noticed we weren't our usual chatty selves during a phone health check-in. National Nurses Week is a time to say thank you to nurses who are there when we need them. Wherever they might be!

Sharon Paul-Sylvestre is a registered nurse with the not-for-profit Visiting Nurse Service of New York. Learn more about how home health care can support your well-being by visiting [www.VNSNY.org](http://www.VNSNY.org) or calling 1-800-675-0391.