

maintaining independence for seniors

how home health care can help

By Alicia Schwartz, MSN-Ed, PCC, CCM, RN

Staying healthy and out of the hospital is always a top priority for seniors, but with different medical conditions that naturally come with aging, this is often easier said than done. Still, ongoing medical care does not always require a long hospital or rehab stay. It can even be done in the comfort of your own home.

As a Registered Nurse and Care Coordinator, my colleagues and I help frail, elderly, and disabled individuals live safely and independently in their homes and communities for as long as possible, where they feel most comfortable and secure. Every day, we meet people who are unaware of the many home care services for which they may be eligible through a certified home health agency or that are covered by managed long-term care health plans.

There are various home health plans based on an individual's unique medical needs and abilities—and the doctor's orders. The goal is to provide skilled care at home so patients can enjoy a high quality of life while receiving professional services designed to restore their health, self-sufficiency, and independence.

For individuals living at home or in a senior community, there are options for medical and non-medical home care. People more likely to need home health services are those recently diagnosed with an illness, who have sustained an injury due to a fall or other event, or are experiencing significant changes or worsening of a health condition.

Home health care involves having a skilled professional provide services in the home. This can be a nurse, physical therapist, occupational therapist, speech therapist, home health aide, or medical social worker. Receiving home care enhances physical and mental well-being and promotes dignity and independence. In-home care also helps alleviate caregiver-stress, leaving more complex care procedures to the care professional. Not only do these services often cost less, but they are typically more convenient and just as effective as a stay at a hospital or nursing facility.

To receive home health services, a referral is required from your doctor. It is always important to have open conversations with your

doctor. If he or she decides that home health is right for you, it is helpful to research available options in your area. A care coordinator with a managed long-term care health plan can help ensure that all of your services are in sync and that your chronic conditions are monitored.



About the Author: Alicia Schwartz, MSN-Ed, PCC, CCM, RN, is a Registered Nurse and Care Coordinator with VNSNY CHOICE Health Plans. Learn more about health plans that help elders in WNY live more comfortably, safely, and independently in their own homes at www.VNSNYCHOICE.org or call 1-888-867-6555.

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