

THE SENIOR GAZETTE

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Maintaining Independence for Seniors: *How Home Health Care Can Help*

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Staying healthy and out of the hospital is undeniably a top priority for seniors, but with different medical conditions and the physical vulnerability that naturally comes with aging, this is often easier said than done. Still, additional medical care does not always require a long hospital stay or rehab stay—it can even be done in the comfort of your own home. [Home Health Care Services](#) provide a viable option that should be strongly considered after an illness, injury or exacerbation of a chronic health problem.

As a Registered Nurse and Care Coordinator with [VNSNY CHOICE Health Plans](#), my colleagues and I work to help frail, elderly, and disabled New Yorkers live safely and independently in their homes for as long as possible, remaining in the communities where they are most comfortable and secure. Every day, we meet new clients who are unaware of the variety of home care services that may be available to them through a certified home health agency or covered by managed long-term care health plans. Here are a few pointers that we hope will help you determine if these options are right for you or an elderly loved one.

For each patient there is an individualized home health plan of care that is based on the person's unique medical needs and abilities—and the doctor's orders. The goal is to provide skilled care at home so that patients can enjoy a high quality of life while receiving professional services designed to restore health, self-sufficiency and independence.

For seniors residing at home or in a senior living community, both medical and non-medical home care are options. The people most likely to need home health services are those recently diagnosed with a new illness, those who have been injured in a fall or other event, and those who have experienced a major change in health condition such as the worsening of a chronic disease process.

To provide these services, a health care professional will come to your place of residence. This may include a nurse, a physical therapist, an occupational therapist, a speech therapist, a home health aide or a medical social worker. Because these professionals come to you, you're able to remain in the comfort and security of your own home. Receiving care at home enhances your physical and mental well-being and promotes dignity and independence. It also can help alleviate caregivers from the stress of learning or performing complex procedures that may be difficult or require care to avoid injuring their loved ones, can be less expensive, more convenient, and just as effective as care you'd receive in a hospital or nursing facility.

To receive home health services, a referral is required from your doctor. If you think you are a candidate, it's important to have an honest conversation with your physician to see if home health is the right option for you. If your doctor decides that home health is right for you, begin to research 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.

To learn more about health plans that help elder New Yorkers live more comfortably, safely, and independently in their own homes, visit www.VNSNYCHOICE.org or call 1-888-867-6555.