

There are many reasons people need health care at home. Sometimes, it's to recover after a hospital stay. Quite often, aging loved ones need support to live safely at home. Home care includes everything from nursing to physical therapy, to even more specialized care like IV Therapy and Heart Failure Care. Assistance with daily activities such as bathing, medication monitoring, or meal preparation also supports independence. Here's how to take the first step toward providing professional home care for your loved one.

HOW TO START THE CONVERSATION



While it can be difficult, it's important to start the conversation about advanced care planning with aging loved ones as early as possible. By beginning to discuss options, preferences, and limitations before an acute event or declining health, adult children will be able to afford these sensitive discussions with aging parents the time and thought they deserve. Candid discussions about plans and goals will help prepare families to navigate a challenging landscape together.

With a few simple tips, you can be well equipped to have a conversation that is productive, respectful, and supportive:

- **Consider the time and the place** – With the family often in one place, the holidays can be a great time to open the conversation. In any case, ensure that you allow enough time for a thoughtful discussion in a place where all are comfortable.
- **Include all decision makers** – It's crucial to ensure everyone is on the same page about decisions and shared responsibilities that will affect the whole family. This may mean including not only you and your aging parents, but siblings and spouses as well.
- **Plan talking points** – Since this can be an emotional conversation, put some thought into the concrete things you'd like to discuss and what you want to accomplish with this discussion.
- **Open with good intentions** – At the outset of the conversation, outline your desire to plan together as a family instead of making decisions unilaterally. This will help aging loved ones feel supported and respected, rather than defensive or dependent.
- **Respect and support opinions** – Help aging loved ones feel in control by acknowledging their input and offering options instead of advice. Open-ended questions and the patience to listen can go a long way.
- **Close with an action plan** – It's easy for these discussions to become vague or abstract. Work to a resolution that includes specific next steps. And remember, as long as your loved one's health or safety is not in jeopardy, agreeing to disagree in order to support their wishes can be the best way to help them see you as an partner in this process.

HOW TO TELL IF CARE IS NEEDED



Choosing home care services is an important decision. In some cases, a doctor or case manager at a hospital will recommend certain services you can receive in your home after an illness, injury or surgery, which can help make your decision easier.

But in other cases, the need for home care develops gradually. So how can you tell if you or a loved one needs help at home? Some signs might be:

- Declining ability to wash and dress
- Memory loss or forgetfulness
- Significant weight loss
- Difficulty finding words
- Changes in speaking, understanding or thinking
- Growing social isolation
- Piles of unpaid bills and unopened mail
- Household chores not being done
- Family members live at a distance or are juggling many needs
- Aging, dementia or the physical or emotional recovery from a health problem that requires special nursing care or simply a hand to hold

HOW TO SELECT A CARE PROVIDER



Selecting a home care provider is one of the most important decisions you can make. When you invite someone into your home, you want to feel trust and confidence in that person.

Be sure that every member of your team – whether nurse, rehabilitation therapist, home health aide, social worker and others – is highly trained, trustworthy and professional. This ensures that they offer a level of skill that comes only with experience, and the compassion that comes with true caring.

Here are some things you may want to consider when choosing a caregiver for you or a loved one:

- How long the agency has been in the business of home care
- Whether the agency is licensed, insured and bonded
- If the agency contract with independent workers or if everyone is an employee
- If the agency's home health aides are certified
- How the company screens employees and whether it performs background checks
- If the agency provides continuing education for employees

To talk with one of our knowledgeable representatives about your home care needs, call us at **(781) 290-4200** or visit **partnersathome.org**