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## Home Care for Seniors: What You Should Know | Cared Upon

Home health care allows seniors to receive the medical care they need in the comfort of their own home instead of a hospital, clinic, or another facility. In many cases, home care can improve a senior's quality of life, reduce the potential for hospitalizations, and even shrink health care costs. It also relieves stress and gives peace of mind to their friends and family members.

Home health care covers a broad range of treatment options, from short-term care for temporary conditions and surgery recovery to long-term care for chronic health issues. Home care professionals can also help fill in specific interpersonal gaps for seniors, offering companionship and attention when a family member cannot act as a caregiver.

This article will take you through what you should know about home health care, including essential basic knowledge, how to find a home care professional in your area, and how to prepare for the all-important first visit.

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### Home Health Care Basics

If an elderly family member requires consistent additional assistance, those closest to them may turn to a home health care professional to give them the support they need.

There are several different types of home care, each one bringing varying levels of cost, expertise, and healthcare possibilities to the table. However, the majority of home care services fall into one of two categories:

#### Non-Medical Care

Most in-home care is non-medical by nature. Options in this category include companionship, meal preparation, laundry, housekeeping, transportation, shopping, and possibly money management.

Non-medical care professionals can also assist with essential daily activities, such as bathing, eating, dressing, and more. Homemakers or home aides typically provide non-medical home care.

#### Medical Care

All medical home care must be performed by a licensed professional, such as a certified nurse or therapist. Duties that fall under medical care include supplying medication, caring for severe wounds or injuries, and physical or speech therapy. These activities also require a doctor's prescription.

A senior may need a combination of medical and non-medical care. A hybrid solution may be necessary, depending on the person's unique health concerns and area professionals' availability.

### Home Care Live-In Workers vs. Shift Workers

Another important home health care distinction to understand is the difference between live-in workers and shift workers. As their names imply, a live-in home caregiver resides in the elder's home, whereas a shift worker's caregiving period is restricted to a predetermined start and end time.

Ordinarily, hiring a live-in caregiver involves providing that individual with their separate bedroom and living space, as well as meals and other amenities that may be agreed upon during contract negotiations. Also, live-in workers aren't on-call at all hours—they need at least eight hours of sleep per night and time set aside yearly for vacation.

To determine whether a live-in or shift worker arrangement is best, keep the following fundamentals in mind at all times:

- **How many hours of care are needed per day?** For individuals who need 12 or more hours of daily assistance, a live-in caregiver may be better.
- **Is care needed throughout the night?** If so, shift workers may be the best option since they're not permitted to sleep while on duty.
- **Which option is most cost-effective for you?** This will depend on various factors, including your location, the kind of care needed, and the number of care hours required per day.
- **How does your loved one and family feel about home care?** Above all else, everyone involved must be entirely comfortable with the home health care decision made.

### How Can I Find a Home Care Provider?

The process of finding a home care provider will vary significantly depending on your location, financial reality, and the unique needs of the senior who requires the care. A quick search in [Cared Upon](#) can yield more specific local results based on what you need and what you're looking for.

It's also possible to hire a home caregiver who lives outside Canada to tend to your elder family member's specific needs. For more information on those possibilities, consult the [Government of Canada's](#) website.

### Questions to Ask Home Care Providers

Hiring a home care professional can be an emotional and nerve-racking decision. That said, it's critical to approach the process with a clear-eyed, level-headed disposition to ensure the senior in question gets the best care possible.

Some questions you should consider asking potential home care providers include (but are not limited to):

- How long have you been a home care provider?
- What certifications do you have?
- Will you develop a customized care plan for my loved one?
- How will you consult with their physician before and after starting the position?
- How do you respond to emergencies or scheduling changes?
- Can I have a copy of your rights and responsibilities of providers, patients, and caregivers?
- How do you handle billing and expenses?

Also, it's essential to avoid making common missteps during the hiring process, such as:

- **Making assumptions about what a caregiver can and cannot do.** If you're unsure of any details at any point in the process, ask questions. If your caregiver(s) work for an agency, policies and contingency plans will differ from organization to organization, so be sure to cover all your informational bases.
- **Setting unclear expectations and care parameters.** Just because home care professionals may advise a particular kind of care doesn't always mean it's key to enhancing a senior's health and well-being in the short-term. Ensure that the caregiver understands which immediate concerns to address first. If you can't provide them with a definitive answer, don't be afraid to ask for a second opinion from their doctor.

As a family member, the transfer of crucial knowledge goes both ways. You need to be prepared to answer at least the basic questions about a senior's current health conditions, medicinal regimen, care needs, likes, and dislikes.

## How to Prepare for Your First Visit

Once you select the home care worker or workers you believe will be the best fit for your elder's needs, it's time to prepare for the first visit. This task involves creating an environment where both the home care professional and senior feel as comfortable as possible.

The essential foundation of any senior-caregiver relationship is trust. Even if the latter doesn't hit it off with the former right away, it's crucial that they have confidence in one another and can hopefully build camaraderie up from there. Your elder family member must also have the opportunity to build a necessary rapport with substitutes who will fill in for their primary caregiver.

### What to Expect on the First Day

The first day of a home health care arrangement boils down into four distinct sections: the introduction, the conversation, the tour, and the follow-up.

Let's take a closer look at each one:

#### The Introduction

Whether the caregiver has been hired through an agency or not, your family may have already met them. That said, it's important to make them feel welcome and start the proceedings on the right foot.

If the caregiver has been hired through an agency, the care supervisor will almost always accompany the professional to ensure that everything runs smoothly and that all sides have their questions answered and their tensions eased.

#### The Conversation

Once everyone has had the chance to make introductions, you and your elder (if they're able to) should sit down with the caregiver and, if present, their supervisor to review the care plan.

This review process is important for two major reasons: to ensure that all parties fully understand their rights and responsibilities and to make changes if the senior's health requires changed substantially since the previous discussion.

After this review is completed, the supervisor will typically exit the conversation, but not before passing on their contact information. Once they leave, you, your elderly family member, and the caregiver will be alone together. This is the first in many opportunities to build rapport on that first day, so be accommodating without being overbearing. Establishing a natural connection between the senior and their caregiver(s) is key.

#### The Tour

After these first pleasantries, it's time to give the new caregiver a tour of the living space, allowing them to familiarize themselves with their surroundings. Be sure to show them important rooms and items, and give them any added context they need to perform their duties.

Once the tour is completed, the next step will generally vary depending on the caregiver's responsibilities. This can range from helping with housekeeping or laundry tasks to performing more intensive medical care. Before anything begins, it's a good idea to ask your elder if they're comfortable so far and, if they aren't, address any concerns they may have.

#### The Follow-Up

After the caregiver completes their shift, their supervisor or agency will be in touch to see how things went. Use the occasion to have an honest discussion and evaluate how the visit went from every angle. If you or the senior receiving care raised any red flags, address them in detail.

If the caregiver was hired independently of an agency, it's still important to discuss with them and iron out any outstanding details or concerns you have before the next visit.

## Important Information to Tell a Home Care Provider

When communicating with a home care provider, regardless of whether they're undertaking medical or non-medical duties, make sure you share all important information regarding your elder family member's health and well-being. This includes:

- Pre-existing medical conditions
- Weekly schedule information
- Current medications
- Dietary restrictions
- Hobbies and interests
- Likes and dislikes

Keep in mind that this list isn't set in stone and will evolve. Ensure that your caregiver(s) are kept up to date on the latest information regarding a senior's health status, daily or weekly routines, and home care preferences.

## Recap

Employing a home care professional's services can bring a host of benefits to seniors and their families. They improve a senior's health and well-being and minimize the stress and potential burdens felt by the loved ones closest to them.

That said, not every home care professional is right for every situation. If you're considering a home care option for someone in your family, it's vital to do your due diligence, ask the right questions before proceeding with any kind of arrangement, and prepare well for that first visit. Only then can you ensure that you're benefiting from the ideal home care experience.

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