Getting the Home Ready for Home Health Services

Use this when the doctor has ordered home health: what to set up before the first visit, what to have ready, and what to ask the agency.

Medicare home health brings a nurse or therapist to the house for short, scheduled visits; an aide may come for a short time to help with bathing. It is not someone who stays all day or overnight. Under federal rules, the first visit usually happens within 48 hours of the referral or of your parent getting home, unless the doctor orders a different start date.

The agency

Agency: _____ **Phone:** _____

24-hour number: _____ **First visit (date and time):** _____

Ordered by (doctor): _____ **Services:** _____

Before the first visit

- ☐ Confirm the date and time of the first visit. If no one has called within a day of getting home, call the agency.
- ☐ Plan for someone in the family who knows the hospital stay to be there for the first visit.
- ☐ Gather: Medicare and insurance cards, photo ID, the hospital discharge papers, the list of doctors, and copies of any advance directive or POLST.
- ☐ Put every medicine bottle in one bag or box for the nurse to review, including over-the-counter medicines and supplements.
- ☐ Clear a place to sit and talk, with a table and good light.
- ☐ Settle pets in another room during visits.
- ☐ Decide how staff will get in: who answers the door, parking, and a lockbox code if you use one (give it by phone, not in writing on the door).

Setting up the house

- ☐ Clear walking paths wide enough for a walker; remove throw rugs and cords.
- ☐ Make the bed, a chair, the bathroom and the kitchen reachable without stairs if possible.
- ☐ Ask the therapist what bathroom equipment would help, such as grab bars, a shower chair or a raised toilet seat, before buying anything.
- ☐ Night lights from the bedroom to the bathroom.

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- [ ] A clean place to keep supplies such as dressings, gloves and wipes.
- [ ] Soap and paper towels by a sink for staff to wash their hands.
- [ ] If oxygen is ordered: no smoking or open flames, and keep tubing out of walkways. Follow the supplier's instructions.

Questions to ask at the first visit

- [ ] Which staff will come (nurse, physical therapist, occupational therapist, speech therapist, aide, social worker), and how often?
- [ ] What are the goals, and about how long will services last?
- [ ] What will the family need to do between visits? Will you teach us?
- [ ] Who do we call between visits, and what is the after-hours number?
- [ ] What isn't covered, such as round-the-clock help or housekeeping, and where could we find it?

Visit schedule

Who	Name	Phone	Days and times
Nurse			
Physical therapist			
Occupational therapist			
Aide			
Other			

> **The care team has the final word**
> Ask the hospital team or your parent's doctor about anything on this list that is unclear. This checklist helps you organize; it does not replace their instructions.

The other checklists in this set: Preparing for a Parent's Hospital Discharge · Questions to Ask Before Leaving the Hospital · The First 72 Hours at Home · Understanding Medication Changes After Hospitalization · Getting the Home Ready for Home Health Services. All at AgingAtHomeSupport.com/hospital-discharge-checklists/

For the whole discharge in one place, the Coming Home from the Hospital workbook (21 fill-in pages) is at AgingAtHomeSupport.com/coming-home-from-the-hospital-workbook/

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