

Post-acute Care Tips for Caregivers

Learn how to provide post-acute care for a family member or friend — and what care settings might best suit their needs.

Helping a family member or friend go from the hospital to a different health care setting — or even their home — can be challenge. This change is called a “post-acute care transition.” The person you’re caring for may be more stable, but they will still need special follow-up care. Read on to learn about different post-acute care settings and tips to make the transition go smoothly.

Post-acute Care Options

The post-acute care that’s right for someone depends on their specific health needs. The following are different post-acute settings a person’s medical team might suggest.

In-home care

If the person you’re caring for is stable enough, they may be able to stay in their home or yours. You can provide in-home care yourself, or hire someone to help. Some people choose to hire a home health aide to give them temporary caregiving breaks. The aide can help with daily routines like meals, bathing and giving medication.

Skilled nursing facilities

If your family member or friend needs a slightly higher level of care, they might need a skilled nursing facility (SNF). SNFs are different from nursing homes because they’re for more short-term needs. They can serve as a transition between a hospital stay and in-home care. This might be the right choice if the person you’re caring for needs speech and language therapy or complex wound care.

Inpatient rehabilitation facilities

Inpatient rehabilitation facilities (IRFs) are a good option if someone will temporarily need more intensive physical therapy, speech pathology, or around-the-clock care. IRFs can be beneficial for people who have suffered a stroke or a spinal cord injury.

Long-term care hospitals

Long-term care hospitals (LTCHs) typically take patients who are transferred there from a critical care unit in another hospital. This type of post-acute care is good for people who may have more than one serious condition. They might not need to be in an intensive care unit anymore, but still need things like pain management, respiratory therapy or head trauma treatment.

POST-ACUTE CARE TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS

3 Tips for Post-acute Care

If you'll be helping someone with their post-acute care, know that you play an important role in their recovery. Here are some tips to see you through the process.

1. Take note of specific instructions

When leaving the hospital, make sure you have clear instructions on a plan. Speak with your family member's or friend's care team so you know what to expect. What will help your family member or friend thrive after they leave the hospital? Will they need physical therapy? A change in eating habits? Don't be afraid to ask as many questions as you need to feel comfortable. Take notes or ask for printed materials to help you know what to expect.

2. Plan ahead for follow-up appointments

Just because your family member or friend is leaving the hospital doesn't mean they won't need follow-up care. Do you know what future appointments will be needed? Schedule these before you leave the hospital. Getting appointments on the calendar can help prevent complications and ensure a smooth recovery.

3. Make safety modifications

If the person you're caring for is going back home, you might need to make changes to their living spaces. For example, if they had a hip or joint replacement, they might want a handrail in the shower to help with balance. Adjust to changes in their mobility or daily life. If they're an older adult, you may want to have them temporarily stay in senior housing while you get the home ready for their new needs.

Sources:

Family Caregiver Alliance: Hospital discharge planning

<https://www.caregiver.org/pilotIntegration/indexPersistent.html?uri=%2Fhospital-dischargeplanning-guide-families-and-caregivers>

5 things you need to know about post-acute care

<https://sixtyandme.com/5-things-you-need-to-know-about-post-acute-care-as-a-caregiver/>

Post-acute care for caregivers

<https://thecaregiverspace.org/post-acute-care-for-caregivers-navigating-the-challenges-of-rehabilitation-and-recovery/>

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