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# WHERE TO RECOVER AFTER A HOSPITAL STAY

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## A CHECKLIST FOR FAMILIES CONSIDERING THEIR OPTIONS FOLLOWING A HOSPITALIZATION AND/OR SHORT-TERM REHABILITATION STAY

*If you answer “yes” to three or more of the questions in the checklist below, a short-term respite stay at an assisted living community may be the perfect next step for your loved one, bridging the gap between hospital/rehab center and home.*

### What to do after a hospital stay?

Your loved one is being discharged from the hospital after a serious health event or is not being admitted because they don't need the intensive medical care to justify a hospital stay or acute rehab setting. Are they ready to go home, or would a short-term stay at an assisted living provide the additional support and services to allow your loved one the time they need to fully recover?

- Does your loved one live alone? Are you, or other family members, able to be there to help or do you live far away, work or have other responsibilities?
- Does your loved one seem confident or strong enough to handle things alone or do you feel they are still recuperating and need to regain strength? Would you like the peace of mind knowing someone is there 24 hours a day in case they need assistance?
- Can your loved one shower without help? Are you worried about their safety in the tub or shower? Are you worried about stairs or falls?

- Is your loved one taking multiple or new medications that have just been prescribed? Could they use reminders and coordination with their physicians and pharmacy with medications and other post-hospital discharge instructions?
- Do you think your loved one will cook proper nutritious meals?
- Did your loved one start rehabilitation in the hospital (PT, OT speech therapy) and need to continue? Many people are not aware that rehab can be completed in assisted living, with services covered by Medicare.
- Is your loved one exhibiting signs of confusion or memory loss? Sometimes a medical event can cause disorientation and confusion temporarily. For someone who already has memory loss, a hospitalization often increases confusion and anxiety, making it difficult to function independently and adhere to discharge plan recommendations.

## What to do following rehab in a skilled nursing facility (SNF) or rehabilitation center?

Your loved one has completed their Medicare-covered rehab. They are being discharged to home, or you are being advised to extend your loved one's stay because they could use additional rehab and support before going home. SNFs typically are for people who require 24-hour nursing services and skilled medical care; is assisted living the better alternative to an extended stay at the SNF?

- At the SNF, is your loved one able to get out of bed and walk to get exercise when they want to, or is movement restricted to their once or twice a day rehab sessions?
- Are the many hours between direct rehab services resulting in boredom, depression or a loss of motivation to fully participate in PT, OT or other therapies?
- Is your loved one isolated in their hospital/nursing home room throughout the day or is there a full schedule of social activities to participate in? If programs are available, does your loved one refuse to participate in "nursing home activities"?
- Is your loved one enjoying nutritious tasty meals in a communal dining room or eating alone in bed?
- Is your loved one allowed to shower and dress in their own clothes every day?
- Does your loved one complain about their surroundings as being too noisy, with bells ringing and overhead pages, or too clinical, with hospital beds and shared rooms, and they can't wait to have their independence and privacy back?
- Does your loved one have memory loss or confusion? A SNF may not have the ability to offer support for a senior with dementia; their cognitive baseline and emotional health can regress without appropriate social support, stimulation and structure.

**Is your loved one allowed to shower and dress in their own clothes every day?**

## 7 Things to Look for On Your Assisted Living Tour

If you decide to consider assisted living, bring this checklist with you on your tour to help you decide if it's the "right fit" for your loved one.

1. **Is the community attractive?** Is the décor attractive and homelike? Does the community have good natural and interior lighting? Is there a nice outdoor space? Do you like the apartments? Can you envision yourself or your loved one feeling comfortable living here?
2. **Do you have a warm feeling being in the community?** Did you receive a warm greeting when you arrived? Does the executive director call residents and staff by name and interact warmly with them as you tour the community? Are people saying hello to you?
3. **Do people look happy and engaged?** Are residents socializing with each other and engaged in programs or activities? Do you see evidence of a robust program for social, fitness, lifelong learning, entertainment and other activities, such as a calendar of events or notices around the community? Are staff members personable and friendly?
4. **Did you sample a meal?** Is it tasty and nutritious? Does the menu have variety? Do you like the dining room? Is the wait staff friendly and courteous?
5. **Does the community have all the latest safety features?** 24-hour emergency response in the apartments, handrails throughout the building, grab bars in the shower, elevators, floors that are non-skid and carpets that are easy to walk on, smoke detectors and sprinklers?
6. **Is the person giving the tour really listening to you?** Are you able to fully describe your current situation and what you hope to achieve by moving to an Assisted Living community? Are you focused on specific solutions and services the community can offer to help you or your loved one become more independent, or are you just listening to a long list of their amenities? Are you confident the community can adequately meet your needs? Have they clearly explained all of the services and monthly costs, including how personal care is billed? Do you have a clear understanding of the assessment and move-in process?
7. **Is there anything about the community that makes it stand out from the others you visited?** Does the community have any special or unique programs, or a way of doing things that seems better? Does the person giving you the tour feel real pride in his or her work and in the community? Do they speak about the company's values or mission and really mean it?

