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# 7 Critical Things to Consider After Being Hospitalized

Returning home requires planning to prevent another stay

by Home Instead (Paid Content) | Comments: 0



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Mom, at home and safe, where she belongs

The last 48 hours since that midnight phone call saying Mom was en route to the hospital have been exhausting and stressful. But now, with discharge instructions in hand, you have mixed emotions about her return home. What if she falls again? Can she really be there alone?

Your hesitation is warranted. Many older adults living with dementia, diabetes, heart issues or other chronic conditions are hospital regulars — and may even experience numerous readmissions. In fact, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality estimates nearly one-fifth (17.3%) of Medicare patients discharged from the hospital are readmitted within 30 days of discharge.

**How can you prevent another midnight phone call?** According to Home Instead Senior Care®, here are 7 ways to keep Mom safe, healthy and independent at home following a hospital stay:

**1. Stay close.** If you have been supporting your senior parent from a distance (either across town or in a different state), these first few days home are critically important. Request help from nearby relatives or friends to keep a close eye on Dad as he regains his strength and navigates what may be diminished mobility at home (for example, if he was hospitalized for a fall). If Mom was hospitalized for a longer period due to a stroke, the transition home will be no less challenging. Make arrangements with your job and family to provide additional coverage for these early days and start planning for your additional in-home care needs.



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**2. Talk about your concerns.** While you may need to get back to your normal routine after a parent's hospitalization, spend some time discussing with your loved one and siblings your concerns going forward. What are the daily tasks Mom feels less confident managing? What safety concerns will keep you up at night? Communicate about these changes and challenges now so you can create an action plan — instead of being reactive when another hospital stay is required. Also, before leaving the hospital, ask the medical team questions about what's next and take careful notes.

**3. Prepare the home.** Upon her return, your loved one may need a wheelchair, hospital bed, walker or cane, raised toilet seat, shower chair, or bath bench or other medical supplies at home. In addition to gathering the necessary items, make sure the house is clean, clutter-free and adapted to Mom or Dad's new mobility needs or first-floor living requirements. Restock the refrigerator or bathroom supply closet. Change burned out light bulbs for adequate lighting, a key component of fall prevention.

**4. Focus on fall prevention.** Even if it wasn't a fall that landed Dad in the hospital, falls are among the top reasons older adults are hospitalized and rehospitalized. Besides removing and resolving fall hazards within the home — and installing home modifications like grab bars for added safety and security — there are a number of simple exercises your loved one may be able to do on a daily basis to increase stability and prevent future falls or injuries.



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Take your medications as prescribed

**5. Stay on top of medication management.** Your parent may leave the hospital with a small pharmacy's worth of medications. This can be one of the most stressful aspects of a senior's return home and is a major contributor to readmission. Per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about 350,000 patients each year need to be hospitalized for treatment after emergency visits due to adverse drug events. Organize your parent's prescriptions in a way that sets him up for success with compliance. Discuss the importance of medication adherence in preventing another hospitalization, and offer support (reminder texts or phone calls) as needed.

**6. Assess health, safety and independence.** As the days go on, keep an eye on your loved one and check in regularly for signs of improving health (proper nutrition, hydration, hygiene and rest) versus the alternative. Take notes on her progress. Ask him how he's managing. Take them to any follow-up appointments with doctors or therapists to help ensure a successful recovery.



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Find a trusted in-home care provider

**7. Consider in-home care.** Managing all of these moving parts — and making sure Mom isn't lonely or isolated in the midst of her recovery — is overwhelming and exhausting, especially if you don't have much support from local family members or friends. Even if you do have a strong support network, there's a lot involved in preventing an older adult's return to the hospital. A home care companion and trusted agency may be your most valuable partners in maintaining Mom's safety and independence at home — so she can stay there.

Help plan for a successful return home after you or a loved one has been hospitalized.

**[Click here to get more information and resources from Home Instead Senior Care](#)**