

When Home Care Ends: A Family Caregiver's Guide

Preparing for the End of Home Care

Home care services that are covered (paid for) by Medicare and private insurance often last just a few weeks. Home care services covered by Medicaid can sometimes go on longer. Talk with your family member's social worker to find out whether your family member can get services paid by Medicaid. The nurse or case manager who opened (started) your family member's case probably told you how long services will last. This amount of time may have changed since then because of your family member's health care needs, insurance, or other factors.



It is always a good idea to ask the case manager or the nurse to let you know in advance when services are about to stop.

Knowing in advance when services will stop gives you and your family member time to plan. It also gives you and your family member the opportunity to say goodbye to the nurses, home care aides, and therapists who came to the home.

You and your family member may have mixed feelings about home care services. At times, you may have felt that these services were very helpful. Other times, you may have felt it was hard to keep up with all the people coming into your home. You may have looked forward to the time when the services would end so you could have a more "normal" routine.

What You Can Do Before Home Care Ends

Most family caregivers have a lot more responsibility once home care services ends.

Here are some ideas that can help:

- ▶ **Find out what type of care your family member will need.**
This may include follow-up visits with his or her doctor or additional physical therapy.
- ▶ **Ask the nurses, aides, and therapists about tasks you now need to do.** For instance, if the nurse managed your family member's medications, now you may need to do this. Or if the home care agency ordered supplies, you may now be the one to buy them. **Make sure you fully understand all tasks you need to do and how to do them.**
- ▶ **Think about whether you need and can hire private help.**
This might be paying someone to help with shopping and cleaning or provide care to your family member.
- ▶ **Learn whether there are any local community resources.**
You can ask for help and referrals from your family member's nurse or social worker.
- ▶ **Make a calendar of your family member's care.** A good way to start is by listing all the tasks that must be done in the first few weeks after home care ends. If you want help doing this, ask the nurse.

Taking Care of Yourself

When home care ends you may have additional responsibilities that were previously managed by the home care staff. Managing and providing care at home for someone who is chronically or seriously ill or disabled is often very difficult and can be overwhelming. Family caregivers often neglect their own health. It is important that you balance your needs with your family member's needs. You need to take care of yourself, not just your family member. This means paying attention to your feelings as well as physical health. It also means taking time for yourself—even for just a short period of time.

How Family and Friends Can Help

Being a family caregiver is a big responsibility and hard job to do. You do not have to do this alone. Now is the time to get help from other family members and friends. Talk with those who offered to help about what they can do. You might begin with small tasks so they do not feel overwhelmed. Here are some ideas about ways family and friends can help:

- ▶ Go grocery shopping
- ▶ Stay with your family member while you do errands
- ▶ Keep track of paperwork, such as bills and insurance claims