



Home-Health-Care Factors for You to Consider

Tips for finding the best fit in caregivers to ensure quality care and comfort

Are you thinking about home health care as a solution to providing help with daily activities such as bathing, meal preparation, and housekeeping? Many older individuals benefit from receiving assistance in the comfort of their own homes, allowing them to maintain their independence longer. But, before you agree to at-home care, carefully consider all the factors involved before you hire a home health aide.

Let's face it, bringing a stranger into your home is a big change. So, to help with a smooth transition and prevent problems from occurring down the road, here are a few steps you can take to ensure you feel totally comfortable with all aspects of this new arrangement.

Establishing a Routine

Start by meeting with the case manager from the home health care agency when he or she comes to your home for an assessment of services needed. At the initial evaluation, it is important that you ask questions so that you understand what type of care is available, and for how many hours a day or week.

The schedule may look like this: On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 9:00 a.m., a home health aide comes to help with bathing, dressing, grocery shopping, and light housekeeping; a visiting nurse arrives at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesdays to check vital signs, medication, and to address any other health concerns; and/or a physical therapist comes on Thursdays at 11 a.m. to establish an exercise program.

Meeting the Home Health Aide

In addition to scheduling physical and medical needs, the agency will assign a caregiver based on compatible personalities and shared interests. That is why it is helpful for you to have a family member attend the home health aide's first visit. And ask that family member to check in with you after the aide leaves to see if you are comfortable with the agency's match. Your family member will be more in tune with whatever objections you may have, and communicate that to the agency so they can select another candidate. Agencies are aware of this potential problem, and usually will provide a suitable replacement.

There may be occasions when a substitute aide is sent if the regular caregiver is sick, or a new caregiver may be assigned to the case for other reasons. Find out what contingency plans the agency has in place under these circumstances. Confirm that you (and maybe your trusted family member) will be contacted ahead of time before an unfamiliar person unexpectedly knocks on your door. Sometimes, scheduling mishaps occur, for example an aide may not show up at the appointed hour, and there is no communication with anyone. To avoid causing unnecessary stress, you can prepare for this possibility by talking about it in advance and creating a back-up plan with the agency.

Many people form special bonds with their aides over time and greatly benefit from the social companionship in their own familiar environment. The success of a home health care plan will depend to a large extent on your comfort level.

By taking the time to find the best fit in caregivers, you will be helping to ensure quality care and comfort.