

WHAT IS HOME CARE?

Topic #4: Finding The Right Home Health Agency

Selecting the right home health care agency starts with a conversation with your physician, nurse, hospital social worker, or hospital discharge planner. These professionals can recommend several reputable agencies based on the services you, or a loved one, needs.

But before deciding on a home health care agency, there are several questions to ask to put your mind at ease that the agency you select is the right fit for you.

Meridian At Home has compiled several lists to help you get started which are located in the “[Resources and Tips](#)” section on the website.

Here are a few of the types of questions you should be asking potential home care agencies to ensure they meet your needs.

For starters:

1. How long has the agency been in business in your community?
2. Is the agency certified by Medicare? If so, that means it meets federal requirements for health and safety.
3. Does the agency have a current license by the state?
4. Is the agency certified by a national accrediting body, such as the Joint Commission for the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations?
5. Are the caregivers bonded and insured?
6. Does the agency employ registered nurses and licensed practical nurses?
7. Are home health aides certified?
8. Does the agency conduct a thorough screening of its employees—criminal background check, drug testing, and skills validation?
9. Does the agency provide a written plan that details the services to be provided, financial arrangements, what is covered by insurance and what is not? Does the patient, physician, and family have input into the plan?

10. Does the care plan outline the patient's course of treatment, describing the tasks to be performed by each caregiver?
11. Does the agency have a nursing supervisor available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week? How accessible is that person and how can you contact them if need be?
12. Are agency caregivers available around the clock, seven days a week?
13. What procedures are in place in case of an emergency?
14. Can the agency provide a list of references to include local physicians, hospital social workers, discharge planners, and other families they have cared for in your community?

Again, go to the [Resources and Tips](#) section of the website for a complete list of questions.

After selecting the home health care agency, it is your responsibility to monitor the care received to make sure it's what your doctor ordered. Having a detailed, written care plan can help you keep track of what visits are made and services were provided. Depending on the length of service you should expect to get a formal report at least monthly.

A note of caution: If you use an individual provider who is not associated with an established home health care agency, be sure to do a thorough check of the person's background and qualifications.

In order to get the best service out of your home health care agency there are some things you can do to prepare for a visit by one of its registered nurses. This information should be communicated both verbally and in writing to the agency and caregiver who will be caring for the patient:

1. Specific illness or injury, and signs of an emergency medical situation
2. Likes and dislikes such as preference for being addressed by their first or last name

3. Medications currently taken, how often, what for
4. Other medical supply needs and/or care required
5. Behavioral or mental problems
6. Use of eye glasses, dentures, walking cane, wheelchair, etc.
7. Special nutritional needs or diet
8. Mobility status, or limitations with activities of daily living
9. Special clothing, shoes, or restraints
10. How you and other family members can be contacted
11. When to lock up the apartment/house, where to find keys, how to use and set the burglar alarm
12. Where to find food, cooking utensils, serving items
13. Where to find cleaning supplies, light bulbs, flash light
14. Which family members or friends have permission to be in the apartment/house

Remember, you can go to the “[Resources and Tips](#)” section of the website for a complete list of the types of information you should go over with the home health agency prior to the start of care.

If you have any questions about your health, or the continued health of your loved ones, contact us. Meridian At Home Advisors specialize in listening to your health care concerns and identifying the services and technologies that will allow you or a person close to you to continue to lead a healthy, independent life at home. Our advisors will gladly arrange for a registered nurse to conduct a free, in-home consultative assessment. Call us toll-free at 1-800-894-6885. You can also click on [Connect with Meridian At Home](#) to have one of our advisors contact you at a convenient time. Meridian At Home, Where you want to be.