

Health Care Delivered to Your Durham Home

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“We were getting ready to go on the vacation of a lifetime when my husband went to have a small growth removed from his liver. Then we found out he had liver cancer. I could not have made it without the support of Duke Home Care & Hospice. When he was discharged from the hospital they provided home health services to allow him to recuperate at home. When we found that the treatments were no longer working they provided hospice care that allowed him to stay in our home, not in the hospital. I had no idea that we could receive this kind of care at home.”

Many people don't realize that they can receive health care services at home, but that is quickly changing. In 2003, more than 20,000 agencies across the US were involved in the care for 7.6 million patients in their homes. The term home care refers to any care provided in the home whether it's hospice, infusion therapy or home health. As the baby boomers age, we will continue to see an increase in the number of patients who need healthcare services delivered in the home.

Hospice

Hospice care focuses on pain and symptom management, or palliative care, not curative care. Most insurance, including Medicare and Medicaid, help pay for hospice services. An interdisciplinary team provides this care, with hospice nurse clinicians, clinical social workers, nursing assistants, chaplains, volunteers, a medical director, the patient's primary care physician, and bereavement counselors. The team develops individual care plans and reviews them weekly to ensure the best possible outcomes for the patients and their families. The focus is ensuring a high quality of life for the patient and their support network. In addition to the care provided by the team, patients are provided with medications related to the hospice diagnosis and durable medical equipment. The patient's physician must certify that the patient has six months or less to live based on the natural progression of the disease in order to qualify for hospice care. Many people believe that you must have cancer to receive hospice services, however only about 46% of hospice patients in the United States have a primary cancer diagnosis.

Home Infusion

Home infusion therapy is the administration of intravenous (through a vein) medication, such as antibiotics and chemotherapy, to patients in their own homes. Small, portable pumps which allow medication to be administered to the patient through an IV (intravenous) line make it possible for many patients to go about their normal daily activities while receiving their medicine. The necessary nursing services, medications, and supplies are usually covered by insurance in the hospital and in skilled nursing facilities. However, in the residential setting, while nursing services and medications are usually covered by insurance, the supplies (which can be quite costly) may not be covered. Some agencies offer financial assistance for supplies based on economic need.

Home Health

Home health agencies provide care skilled services that are needed intermittently in someone's home. Home health agencies can provide nursing services, physical therapy, speech therapy,

occupational therapy and even social work services in the home. To be covered by insurance, these services need to be based on physicians' orders.

Unlike home health care, personal care or chore services don't require physician's orders. However, if insurance is going to cover chore services (for example, helping with bathing, light housekeeping, etc.), the person must also need skilled care (home health).

Anyone interested in receiving in home health care services should talk to their doctor since doctors must prescribe home health, hospice and infusion services. Services are provided for patients in their "home" - whether that is a skilled nursing facility, assisted living facility or private residence.

CLIP and SAVE

- National Association for Home Care & Hospice: You can contact this agency to find the various agencies that serve Durham residents. (202) 547-7424, www.nahc.org.
- Hospice Association of America: (202) 546-4759, www.nahc.org/HAA.
- National Home Infusion Association: (703) 549-3740, www.nhianet.org.
- Duke HomeCare & Hospice: (919) 620-3853, www.dhch.dukehealth.org.
- Durham County Health Department Home Health Services: (919) 560-7600, <http://www.durhamcountync.gov/departments/phth/>
- Durham County Department of Social Services Home Care Program: (919) 560-8600, <http://www.durhamcountync.gov/departments/dssv/>

Numerous other private agencies serve the Durham area with home health, hospice, and home infusion services. This brief listing is not exhaustive and should not be viewed as an endorsement.

"The Partnership for a Healthy Durham is the Healthy Carolinians planning team for Durham and serves as the Health Committee for the City and County's Results-Based Accountability initiative. The Access to Care Committee is responsible for this series of articles. For more information on the Partnership, see www.healthydurham.org or call 560-7833."