

Elder Care Dictionary

by Jack Rosenkraz

Adult Day Care/Adult Day Healthcare

Both adult day care and adult day healthcare can give caregivers an occasional or a regular respite from caretaking. In the case of caretakers who work outside jobs, it delays permanent long-term care.

Adult day healthcare provides medical services in addition to activities. Adults with physical and mental disabilities are the primary targets of the program, and the care is intended to help patients relearn the ability to care for themselves. Nursing home care, therapeutic activities, meals, and transportation are provided in a safe environment. The activities provided can help improve the mental, physical, and emotional well-being of the patient.

Caregivers receive peace of mind that their loved one is having a good experience while they can take a break.

You may be eligible for a home or community-based Medicaid waiver. We can advise you on this and the other issues involved in integrating adult day care and adult day healthcare into your or a loved one's long-term care plan.

Dementia

Dementia is a progressive brain dysfunction caused by Alzheimer's disease, as well as other illnesses such as brain tumors and strokes. Poor nutrition can also be a cause. The frequency of dementia increases with age, with one-third of those over ninety suffering from it. About one-half of the cases are caused by Alzheimer's.

Signs of dementia include forgetfulness (especially short-term memory loss), lack of concentration (including problems with familiar activities), poor judgment, problems communicating (including substituting nonsensical words and phrases), and personality changes (including mood swings, disruptive behavior, and loss of initiative).

To help prevent dementia, stimulate your mind regularly by learning new things, doing puzzles, and staying mentally and physically active.

Diagnosing dementia is important because it allows proper treatment and care. The latest pharmaceuticals can help slow the progression of the illness, and sometimes the underlying cause can be alleviated. At the very least it allows both patient and family to acknowledge what is happening.

We can help you plan for the care of a loved one with dementia, as well as plan for your own long-term care. Although planning for the worst can be challenging, remember that it is far more difficult for your loved ones to do so than it is for you when you are healthy.

For more information on Alzheimer's, please see our Alzheimer's Resource Guide

Health Rehabilitation Therapies

Suffering a stroke, heart attack, fall, surgery, or other major physical problem more times than not results in intensive physical therapy and rehabilitation to help the patient relearn mental, physical, and other skills. The goal is to help the patient regain independence.

When evaluating a rehabilitation program, consider the following:

What services do you need, and does the program provide all or most of them? Your doctor will be able to help you with this analysis, but certain factors like convenience to home, transportation, and schedule you will have to consider individually.

Is the program suitable to your needs? Too demanding? Not demanding enough? Remember that you can change programs as you progress.

Is the program certified? Does it have good credentials?

Can family participate in the sessions? Are they encouraged to do so?

Are the costs covered by Medicare or insurance?

Do they provide services to help the patient transition back into a home environment?

Does the program specialize in working with seniors?

Rehabilitation may take several hours a day and may involve speech, occupational, and physical therapy, among others. You may work with physical therapists, speech pathologists, social workers, psychologists, and other professionals, and you may receive your care at a hospital, nursing home, clinic, or other facility, or even at your home.

Loneliness/Isolation/Mood Swings

Good preparation for retirement and your long-term care is one way to prevent loneliness. By staying mindful of the proximity of religious organizations, social groups, and selecting a long-term care facility in case you need one someday are all good steps in making sure you are surrounded by people you like and care about.

To prevent or ward off loneliness, keep busy – try starting a new hobby, write letters, and stay as active as possible. Even if you don't feel like it at first, going through the motions will help

you. Try volunteering, and try not to rely on the television too much for entertainment. Intergenerational activities, clubs, and organizations can be a great boost, as can online groups. Plan ahead for trigger dates, such as anniversaries and holidays, so you aren't caught off guard.

Depression is not a normal part of aging. If your feelings worsen, do not improve after two weeks, or if family and friends seem concerned, you should consider talking with your doctor. Remember that loneliness and depression can affect your physical health as well, so it is safer to be cautious and take care of any potential problems.

Parkinson's Disease

Parkinson's disease is usually diagnosed when the patient is between 55 and 60, and more than half of those with Parkinson's are more than 65 years old. Parkinson's is caused when the chemical responsible for smooth muscle action, dopamine, isn't produced in sufficient quantity. Unfortunately, there are no definitive tests for early Parkinson's, but even after diagnosis many people live a number of years before being hindered by the symptoms.

For more information on Parkinson's disease, please see our Parkinson's Resource Guide, available on the publication page of our website.

Prescription Assistance

Assistance paying for medication can come from several places: discount cards issued by drug companies, free samples from your doctor (always remember to ask if they forget to offer), county health clinics, non-profit organizations, and programs sponsored by the state of Florida.

One form of state-sponsored assistance requires pharmacies in the Florida Medicaid program to offer Medicare recipients a prescription drug discount. If the pharmacy accepts private discount cards, the rate for the drug must be the same or lower price of that under the Medicare discount. Remember that different pharmacies might have different retail prices, so it is still worth shopping around.

The Silver Saver program is also provided by the state and gives Florida elders with a limited income a \$160 a month benefit toward prescriptions. Current income levels are between \$7,805 and \$10,644 annually.

It is worth asking your doctor for alternative medication. If a new medication is prescribed, perhaps an older one with a generic version would do just as well for your condition. It is also worth asking if you will develop a tolerance to the drug, requiring higher and more expensive doses, and whether there is an alternative that will not have this effect. You should also ask your pharmacist on ways to save on the dispensing fee, meaning the amount they charge you for the prescription.

It is a good idea to review your prescriptions annually by making a list of your medications. Bring this list with you when you visit the doctor so you can help prevent reactions between different prescriptions.

Stress Management

Retiring, moving to a new home at an assisted living or long-term care facility, or the death of a spouse or other loved ones can all trigger stress. Stress can contribute to a number of physical problems, including high blood pressure, heart disease, headaches, and stomach problems.

Symptoms of stress include sweating or a pounding heart not related to exercise or illness, general irritability or grouchiness, an urge to flee, sleeping too much or too little, feeling out of control, and feeling the need to be continually productive. Caregiver stress is also a serious problem, and if you are caring for a loved one, be sure you schedule breaks to manage your own needs.

If you having problems with stress, it is all right to ask for help. Talk with your doctor, family, or friends. You may also want to review the section on Loneliness in this guide since it is a cause of stress as well.

Strokes

A stroke happens when the blood flow to the brain is cut off. The cells cut off from the flow immediately begin to die from lack of oxygen and nutrients. Ischemic strokes are the predominant type and are caused by a blood clot. A lesser type, called a mini-stroke, does not result in permanent brain damage, but is a strong indicator that the person is susceptible to strokes.

The other type, a hemorrhagic stroke, is when a blood vessel in the brain breaks. Only about twenty percent of strokes are hemorrhagic. It is not always clear that someone is having a stroke because the victim might simply appear confused or disoriented. The best chances for recovery, though, are when the stroke is identified and treated quickly.

A sudden inability to move or speak, or one-sided facial paralysis, are signs of a stroke that you might recognize in a loved one or companion. Sudden confusion or problems with speech, difficulty seeing in one or both eyes, dizziness, and sudden severe headache with no identifiable cause are also all symptoms. A drug called t-PA, when administered within sixty minutes of the onset, can greatly reduce the long-term effects by thinning the blood and increasing blood flow to the brain.

High blood pressure, heart disease, smoking, diabetes, and high cholesterol are all causes of strokes. Regular exercise, a healthy diet, and managing stress are all ways to prevent stroke.

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