

Home care for older people – what you should expect

Information for the public

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Home care

NICE guidelines provide advice on the care and support that should be offered to people who use health and care services.

Home care is more than just help with personal care, such as washing and dressing yourself. It can help you stay in your own home and do the things that are important to you, like doing your own shopping or meeting friends.

Putting you in charge

You should be in charge of deciding what support you get, although you can ask a family member or carer to help. You should always feel in control and that your privacy and dignity are respected. People that help you to plan your care should ask about what gives you peace of mind, and what makes you feel safe and unsafe.

Care that is unique to you

The care you get should reflect what is important to you, what you feel you can do and what you want to be able to do. It should be recorded in an easy to understand care plan in a format that is right for you, for example in large print. It should consider if the things you want to do involve any risks, and whether the benefits of doing these things outweigh the risks.

You should also be given a copy of a 'care diary' to keep in your home. Home care workers and others who help you at home (like community nurses and physiotherapists) should update it every time they visit.

Familiar home care workers

So that you are familiar with the people coming into your home, the same workers should visit you. They should have the right skills to meet your needs. They should be able to support you, for example if you have dementia, are deaf, blind or deafblind, or need help coping with bereavement. They should also be able to spot if your health or situation is getting worse. New care workers should be introduced to you before they visit on their own. Home care workers should have enough time to provide good quality care, without being rushed, and most visits should normally be longer than 30 minutes.

What you should expect

People who provide your home care services should:

- Give you information in a way that you understand and in a format you can use.
- Make sure home care workers have had the right training.
- Make sure home care workers have enough time to give you good care.
- Take action straight away if your care worker is late or misses a visit.
- Regularly check that you are happy with your care.
- Tell you about local organisations that provide specialist support (such as local societies for people who are deaf, blind, deafblind or have dementia).

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- Make sure you know who to contact if you have a complaint.

Questions you might want to ask

- What are the different ways home care can be paid for?
- Who will my home care worker(s) be?
- How will I be kept informed of any changes in my care?
- What should I do if I think a visit is too short?
- What should I do if a visit is missed or late?
- Can you put me in touch with some local activities or groups?
- What can I do if I am unhappy with the care I am getting?

Sources of further information and support

- To find out more about what NICE says on this topic, see the [home care](#) guideline.
- For information and concerns about care contact the [Care Quality Commission](#) (03000 61 61 61) or the [Local Government Ombudsman](#) (0300 061 0614).
- For support contact [Age UK](#) (0800 169 6565), [Carers Trust](#) (0844 800 4361), [Carers UK](#) (0808 808 7777), [Independent Age](#) (0800 319 6789) and The Relatives and Residents Association (0207 359 8136).
- [NHS Choices](#) has lots of information about health conditions and social care.

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