

The Key to Aging Well at Home: *Embracing the Continuum of Care*



There's a phrase at the heart of healthcare at home that is often misunderstood but is central to aging in place: **the continuum of care**. The first time you hear it, which often can be when you are starting the search for an in-home care provider, the phrase may seem a little strange.

In reality, the continuum of care simply describes the care available to an individual at all phases of their healthcare journey. It is the entire spectrum of care, from needing a little help managing the activities of daily living like shopping for groceries or managing your medications, to needing a lot of nursing help due to advanced illness or being on a life-support system.

At the center of the continuum of care is you. It's the idea that whatever your healthcare needs are, the right services and support are standing by and ready to help.

Services available along the continuum of care fit into four categories: personal care, healthcare at home, palliative & supportive care, and hospice care. Individuals can receive care from more than one of these service areas at once.

Personal Care

When someone first starts receiving care at home, personal care services may be all that are needed. Also known as home care, assistive care, and private duty care, these are a variety of services that help an individual more easily manage their daily lives, including but not limited to:

- **Hands-on care, such as help with the activities of daily living like dressing, bathing, going to the bathroom, and grooming**
- **Basic homemaking services like doing the laundry or light cleaning**
- **Preparing meals**
- **Medication reminders**

- **Companionship services like shopping, running errands, transportation, or simply playing games or chatting**

Personal care services are available to a wide variety of individuals of many ages and ability levels, including those who are recovering from surgery, living with a chronic illness or disability, or who just need a little company or help with transportation.

Family caregivers who need a break often turn to personal care services for help.

Healthcare at Home

Things like chronic illness, disability, and recovery from surgery or injury can mean an individual needs a little more help to live well at home. That's where healthcare at home, also known as home health, comes in.

This next level of care provides services that are convenient, compassionate, and the same top quality that are provided in a hospital or skilled nursing facility. Examples of healthcare at home services include but are not limited to:

- **Skilled nursing**
- **Wound care and dressing changes**
- **Injections**
- **Patient and family education of patient condition**
- **Medication education and management**
- **Diabetic care**
- **Nutritional support**
- **IV therapy**
- **Physical, speech, and occupational therapy**

Those who receive healthcare at home learn that they are not alone as they manage their condition. They are supported by professional, trained personnel every step of the way.

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Palliative & Supportive Care

A type of care that is often misunderstood is palliative & supportive care. Because the care is often provided along with hospice care, many people believe they are the same. While palliative & supportive care is an important part of end-of-life care, it's also hugely helpful for individuals all along the continuum of care, including those receiving healthcare at home or hospice services.

The main goal of palliative & supportive care is to improve the quality of life of individuals and their families. It is thoughtfully designed to make it easier to live with any serious illness such as cancer, heart disease, lung disease, kidney disease, Alzheimer's, and more. This specialized care is focused on relieving the pain, symptoms, and stress related to your illness.

Palliative & supportive care helps individuals more easily receive their medical treatments and provides relief for symptoms such as pain, shortness of breath, fatigue, constipation, nausea, loss of appetite, and trouble sleeping. It can be provided at any stage of your illness.

Palliative & supportive care works together with your existing care team to add an extra layer of support for your illness or injury. Services include but are not limited to:

- Medication
- Relaxation techniques
- Emotional and spiritual support
- Nutritional support
- Family caregiver support

Care plans are tailored to what matters most to you.

Hospice Care

When an individual's serious illness or injury leads doctors to estimate their life expectancy to be six months or less, the next important phase

along the continuum of care is hospice care. A common myth is that hospice is an option only for those in the final days of life, but hospice care can help improve quality of life for many months during the last phase of a life-limiting illness.

When an individual and their family chooses to begin hospice care, they are shifting their goals from curing their disease to managing their pain and other symptoms.

Hospice services include but are not limited to:

- Specialized nursing care
- Medical equipment and supplies such as hospital beds, wheelchairs, bandages, and catheters
- Medication for pain and other symptoms
- Emotional and spiritual counseling
- Volunteer services
- Bereavement care
- Grief support groups
- Respite care to provide family caregivers with a break

Trusting the Continuum of Care

At its heart, aging in place through the continuum of care means whether you need a little help or a lot of help, you can rely on providers you trust to provide you with the level of services you need right when you need them.

This philosophy of providing a broad range of services to meet individualized needs works to prevent gaps in healthcare, ensuring that individuals are supported and thoughtfully involved in every part of their care at home. The result is a better quality of life and the peace of mind that they are not alone.

To find an Intrepid USA Care Center near you, visit www.intrepidusa.com.