



Subscriber
Content

Health & Wellness Options



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This section will deal with a broad array of options from staying healthy, managing acute or chronic health challenges, and a blend of both.

WELLNESS

Staying healthy is like saving money. Some of us have done a great job ever since we got that first piggy bank. Some of us scramble to fix imbalances when we are face-to-face with a need.

Some of us have the discipline to walk, exercise, and eat a balanced nutritional diet low in fat and sugars while a lot of us put it off until the doctor says to get our weight, blood pressure, or A1c under control.

Being well requires us to think multi-dimensionally. And, as much as we all would like a quick fix, being well requires some thought.

Physical Wellness

As we get older range-of-motion, core strength, balance, and endurance are affected. Regular exercise targeted to address these common areas can be vital in maintaining a sense of well-being as well as managing chronic problems like joint pain.

There are several options. In our area YMCA, community recreation centers, and senior centers offer organized individual and group exercise programs. Personal Trainers are an affordable way to gain the technical skills to continue an exercise routine on your own.

Yoga and tai-chi and other low-impact exercise programs can be important ways for seniors to maintain vitality. A visit to a licensed Physical Therapist (may be covered by your insurance) can create a self-directed exercise program just for your needs.

Emotional and Physical Wellness

Retirement brings on a whole new set of emotional and mental health challenges. It is the biggest life change many of us have encountered since we were young. Seniors may find a new interest in worship, meditation, art, and other emotional/spiritual pursuits that may have been neglected during a busy work career. Mental and emotional challenges may become issues as we age...grief from lost loved ones or friends, financial stress, and just the change of daily routine can trigger mild to severe reactions.



HEALTH CARE

In the last few years, options for home delivered health care have blossomed. This is due in part because of Medicare regulatory changes designed to reduce the number of inpatient hospitalization days required for a procedure.

It is also true that technology has responded by creating efficient care modes that can be effectively provided in a home setting. Home Health Care is the term that encompasses the majority of these services.

A nurse, nurse practitioner, therapist, or any of several other professional care providers may tend a patient at home. These services are licensed and generally reimbursed in whole or in part by medical insurance, Medicare, and Medicaid.

An extension of this home delivered care is Hospice. Hospice is a kind of care provided to a patient whose prognosis is terminal. There is much confusion about Hospice and some are reluctant to use this valuable service because they do not fully realize the value.

Unlike Home Health, which is designed to care for a patient who is getting well, the goal of Hospice care is not to get well, but to live as well as one can with a terminal diagnosis. Hospice care is licensed to provide nursing care, medicine, equipment, and much more. Medicare and Medicaid will reimburse for Hospice care.

NON-LICENSED HOME CARE

Americans are living longer so it is no surprise that enterprise has organized support services to help with non-medical support at home. There are many providers of home supportive services such as light housekeeping, preparing meals, assisting with dressing, “sitters”, and other personal care services for seniors living at home who need this kind of assistance.

These services definitely fill a role in the spectrum. It is important that consumers know the limits of this level of care; home care services in this category are not licensed health care providers. There are limits to the type of care provided and these services are not usually covered by Medicare nor insurance.



DOCTORS

Sometimes the family doctor is not enough. Specialization in medical practice has reached a new high. In addition to orthopedics, cardio, and internal medicine specialists, there are now several medical specialists devoted to the aging process. The name for this group of doctors is “Geriatrics”. These doctors are acutely tuned in to the various ailments and conditions that affect us as we age. Many of us have more than one doctor because we have multiple ailments.

It can be important to get a comprehensive care plan for a senior with multiple medical needs. In these situations, a Geriatrician is vital in managing medications and referrals to specialists. A Life Care Plan can save money and organize the care to avoid contrary events.

The subspecialties in this category include specialists in memory care and Alzheimer’s dementia. While many of these age-related ailments are curable, most are chronic conditions that benefit from specialists who employ an arsenal of treatments and diagnostic advancements that make these conditions less problematic. Medicare will even cover home visits by physicians willing to make house calls and tele-medicine is becoming more prevalent.

SeniorSmart advisors can be helpful in making decisions about care options and other options tailored to specific needs. As always, seniors making these care choices must be aware of insurance, Medicare, and Medicaid reimbursement.

Links to home health agencies and hospice providers in Alabama:

Home Health Agencies

<http://dph1.adph.state.al.us/FacilitiesDirectoryReports/Reports/ReportIndex-2020-08-17-0839223090480.pdf>

Licensed Hospice Providers

<http://dph1.adph.state.al.us/FacilitiesDirectoryReports/Reports/ReportIndex-2020-08-17-0841523856739.pdf>
