



HOME CARE

Home care is an array of services which enables individuals to receive care at home and live as independently as possible, when they may otherwise have to be in hospital.

Home care includes:

Short-Term Acute Care:

- Providing acute care at home for people who would otherwise have to be in a hospital; for example, post-surgical care, rehabilitation, or health instructions on the use of medical equipment for chemotherapy or diabetes.

Palliative/End-of-Life Care:

- Providing compassionate care and the best quality of life for the critically or terminally ill by ensuring their comfort and dignity. Palliative/end-of-life home care supports people who would prefer to die at home or remain home for as long as possible.

Assessed Need:

- Determining the health care needs of individuals so that they may stay at home or in the community. Trained health care professionals assess an individual's ability to function independently, his or her physical and mental needs, and his or her environment.

Why is home care a priority?

Home care is a priority because it is fundamental to the overall sustainability of the health care system. With new technologies and drugs we are able to provide some acute care outside hospitals, and by doing so, we make beds available for Canadians with complex or urgent needs who can only be cared for in a hospital.

This helps reduce wait times for acute care beds and is a more efficient way of providing care. In this context, it is not so much about home care as it is about being able to deliver acute care to people at home.

The aging population will result in greater health care needs of Canadians. Short term acute home care and palliative care help meet those needs in a safe and appropriate manner.

Benefits for Canadians

- Improved access to a common set of services in the home and community, regardless of where they live in Canada - this set of home care services would be paid for by governments;

- Enables people to receive care at home, where they are usually more comfortable and more independent;
- Reduced wait times for hospital beds by preventing unnecessary hospitalization;
- Reduced length of stay in the hospital with the assurance that appropriate care will be available in the community;
- The option for the terminally ill to die at home or to remain at home for as long as possible.

Progress to Date:

In September 2000, First Ministers described home care as a critical component of a fully integrated health system, making it a priority for governments.

- In February 2003, the Prime Minister and Premiers agreed to the Accord on Health Care Renewal which identified home care as a priority.
- The Government of Canada established a \$16 billion Health Reform Transfer to provide provinces and territories funding for three initiatives, one of which is short term acute home care. The federal government is committed to working with the provinces and territories to determine what kinds of services will be provided under the agreement.
- To support family caregivers, the Government of Canada introduced a new 6 week block of compassionate care benefits administered through the Employment Insurance Program, for those who need to leave their jobs temporarily to care for a gravely ill or dying child, parent or spouse. This program came into effect on January 4, 2004.