

Healthcare Support Services

Understanding the Services That Support Medical Care

During medical treatment or recovery, people may encounter a variety of healthcare services that exist outside of their primary doctor's office or hospital team.

These services often provide medical treatment, therapy, equipment, or recovery support after illness, injury, or hospitalization.

Because many of these services are unfamiliar, people and families may feel unsure about what they do or when they are used. This guide explains some common support services people may encounter while navigating healthcare. It isn't a complete list — the healthcare system includes many different services. Additional resources may be added over time to help explain other parts of the healthcare system.

Home Health Services

Home health services provide medical care in a person's home when it is difficult or unnecessary for them to travel to a clinic.

Home health teams may provide:

- nursing visits
- physical therapy
- occupational therapy
- wound care
- medication support

Home health services are often arranged after a hospital stay or when a physician determines that medical care is needed at home.

Infusion Services

Infusion services provide medications or treatments that must be delivered through an intravenous (IV) line.

Infusion therapy may be provided in:

- outpatient infusion centers
- hospitals
- sometimes in a person's home

Examples of infusion treatments include:

- IV antibiotics
 - chemotherapy
 - biologic medications
 - hydration therapy
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Durable Medical Equipment (DME)

Durable medical equipment suppliers provide medical equipment used in the home to support recovery or daily living.

Examples include:

- walkers and wheelchairs
- hospital beds
- oxygen equipment
- CPAP machines
- mobility aids
- bathroom safety equipment such as grab bars
- accessibility supports such as wheelchair ramps

These items are often ordered by a physician and supplied through specialized equipment providers.

Respiratory Therapy

Respiratory therapists help care for people who have breathing or lung-related conditions.

They may assist with:

- oxygen therapy
- breathing treatments
- ventilator support
- monitoring lung function

Respiratory therapists often work with people who have conditions such as asthma, COPD, pneumonia, or other respiratory illnesses.

Dialysis Services

Dialysis services provide treatment for people whose kidneys are no longer able to effectively remove waste and excess fluid from the body.

Dialysis treatments may occur in:

- specialized dialysis centers
- hospitals
- sometimes in a person's home

People receiving dialysis typically attend treatment on a regular schedule as part of managing kidney disease.

Rehabilitation Facilities

Some people require additional recovery support after hospitalization.

Rehabilitation facilities provide structured therapy programs designed to help people regain strength and independence.

Rehabilitation may include:

- physical therapy
- occupational therapy
- speech therapy
- nursing care to support medical needs and monitor recovery

People may stay in a rehabilitation facility for a short period before returning home.

Skilled Nursing Facilities

Skilled nursing facilities provide medical care and rehabilitation services for individuals who are not ready to return home after a hospital stay.

These facilities may provide:

- nursing care
- medication management
- rehabilitation therapy
- assistance with daily activities

Some people stay temporarily for recovery, while others may require longer-term care.

Palliative Care Services

Palliative care focuses on improving quality of life for people living with serious or chronic illnesses. Palliative care teams help people manage symptoms and better understand their care options.

They may assist with:

- symptoms and pain management
- coordinating care between providers
- helping people understand treatment choices
- supporting people and families during serious illness

Palliative care can be provided alongside ongoing medical treatment and is available in hospitals, clinics, and sometimes at home.

Hospice Services

Hospice care focuses on comfort and quality of life for individuals nearing the end of life.

Hospice teams may provide:

- symptom management
- nursing visits
- emotional and spiritual support
- assistance for families and caregivers

Hospice care may be provided at home, in hospice centers, or in specialized units within healthcare facilities.

Healthcare often involves many services beyond doctor visits alone. Understanding these support services can make medical situations feel less confusing and help people and families better understand the resources available to them.