



# Home Health Hospital Decision GUIDE

As a home health patient, if you develop new or worsening symptoms, you will need to decide if you want to continue care in the home or go to a hospital.

Research has shown that, in some circumstances, hospitalization may be unnecessary. Whether hospitalization can be prevented depends on your condition and the ability of the home health staff to provide the necessary care.

Since there are risks and benefits of care in a hospital, it is important to make the right decision. Your decision depends on several factors, such as the severity of your condition and your overall health status.

**Contact your home health provider to discuss your wishes and the best option.**

Home Health Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_

## How To Make Your Wishes Known

There are several things you and your family can do to ensure your wishes about hospital care are addressed:

- Participate in your plan of care (i.e., make a decision about your treatment preferences) with home health staff and your primary care provider (i.e., doctor, nurse practitioner or physician's assistant).
- Complete an **Advance Directive** document that provides instructions on how you want medical decisions to be made if you can't make them. Florida recognizes a **Living Will** and **Designation of a Health Care Surrogate** for care in emergencies and at the end of life.
- Learn about the home health resources available to treat your new symptom or condition (For example, lab, X-rays, oxygen, zone tools, wound care, intravenous (IV) fluids, and medications) and discuss the risks versus benefits of going to the hospital.
- Consider the financial burden and other factors of transferring to the hospital versus in-home treatment, if appropriate.



## Benefits of Staying in Your Home with Home Health Care

There are benefits of staying in the home when a new symptom or condition occurs – assuming it is safe to treat the condition in the home and staying in the home is consistent with your and your family's preferences. At-home treatment allows you to:

- Have continuity of care. You will continue to receive care from staff members who know you and can respond to your individual preferences and needs.
- Remain in your home with your possessions and maintain your schedule and routines when possible.
- Avoid a trip to the hospital and long delays waiting in the emergency room.
- Avoid hospital-related complications and potentially being exposed to infections.

## Reasons To Go to the Hospital

If you require clinical observation or more complex tests/treatments, such as abnormal vital signs or uncontrolled severe symptoms, the hospital offers:

- Sophisticated lab tests, X-rays and scans
- Access to doctors and specialists who are in the hospital every day
- Blood transfusions
- Intensive care units

## Risks of Going to the Hospital

You could be at risk of additional complications while in a hospital. These complications can occur even in the best hospitals. Factors such as older age, chronic medical problems and your health condition, combined with the hospital environment, can put you at high risk for complications. These complications include:

- New or worsening confusion
- More time spent in bed, which puts you at greater risk of blood clots, skin breakdown, pressure ulcers, muscle weakness, loss of function and other complications
- Less sleep and rest due to noise levels
- Increased risk for:
  - Falls due to unfamiliar surroundings
  - New infections
  - Depression due to decreased socialization with friends and family