When it’s time to leave the hospital, an individual may still require rehabilitation following a stroke, surgery or extensive treatment for kidney, heart or respiratory conditions.

**TRANSITIONAL CARE**

Transitional care is short-term skilled care that helps patients move between different health care settings, such as between medical units in a hospital, to a rehabilitation facility, or back home. Attention to quality care at this time is especially important for older adults, as they may be managing multiple health conditions. A poor handoff that leads to breakdowns in communication, delayed care or mismanagement of medication can create problems for people trying to regain their strength and mobility.

It’s important for family caregivers to work closely with doctors, nurses and social workers during these transitions. In-hospital stays are mostly short-term, and people are usually cared for by their own doctors with assistance from licensed nursing staff and teams of therapists – speech, recreational, occupational, respiratory and others.

**QUESTIONS ABOUT TRANSITIONAL CARE INCLUDE:**

- Does your insurance cover these services or stays?
- Do you need to make any special admittance arrangements?
- What types of services are offered?
- Is your doctor in charge of your case while you’re here?
- How long can you stay in transitional care?
- Are your meals included?

**REHABILITATION CENTERS**

Specialized therapies are provided on an inpatient or outpatient basis, with the goal of helping individuals reach their highest level of functioning in daily life. Rehab, when recommended by a doctor, is usually covered by personal health insurance or Medicare, if the individual is eligible. Locations may be freestanding, in connection with a hospital, or a part of the continuum of care in a retirement community.

**QUESTIONS ABOUT REHABILITATION CENTERS INCLUDE:**

- Is the location close enough for family members to make regular visits?
- Does insurance cover the costs of the services you will need?
- Does it offer programs specific to your condition?
- Will you be seeing your doctor or a new one?
- Is this doctor board-certified for rehabilitation?
- Will you be working with a regular team of therapists?
- Is the team experienced in treating your condition?
- Is 24/7 care provided by certified physicians and/or registered nurses certified in rehabilitation nursing?
- How are treatment plans developed?
- Is there an individual treatment plan for each patient?
- Who is responsible for monitoring the plan?
- How often is therapy provided?
- Has the center or team demonstrated success in treating your condition, including successfully discharging patients back into the community?
- Are there wellness activities or support groups offered by the center?
- Will a case manager or social worker assist with discharge and insurance?
- Are family members able to observe/assist during therapy sessions?
- Do you have access to other on-site specialists or therapies if needed?
- Does the center have hospital support in case of a complication or new illness?
- Will prescriptions supplied by your personal doctor be honored and continued by the staff at the center?
- Is outpatient and home therapy care available?
- Is the program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) and/or the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO)?

Rehabilitation can be a slow process, but people in rehab often build rapport with other patients and come to encourage one another. Choose a rehabilitation center that’s credible, makes you feel comfortable and, if at all possible, is close enough for your family to be supportive.
RESOURCES:
Transitional Care: Moving patients from one care setting to another, Naylor M., Keating, S., AM J Nurs, 2008
cbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2768550/

Selecting a Nursing & Rehabilitation Center, Illinois Council on Long-Term Care
nursinghome.org/selecting.html

10 Tips for Choosing a Rehab Facility, Cleveland Clinic, Ohio health
health.clevelandclinic.org/2013/12/10-tips-for-choosing-a-rehab-facility/

LINKS:
Compare different inpatient rehabilitation facilities
medicare.gov/inpatientrehabilitationfacilitycompare/