

senior focus

What distinguishes home care from hospice care

Hospitals are in the business of treating patients and helping them overcome injuries and illnesses. In many instances, hospitals offer unparalleled care. However, hospitals are not always without risk and sometimes are not the most comfortable places for their patients, particularly those recovering from injuries or facing end of life.

Fluorescent lights, beeping machine monitors and 24-hour personnel conversing at all hours of the day can disrupt natural sleep patterns. Hospital patients may be woken at night for status checks and to draw blood. Staff shortages may mean some patients become lower

priority and do not receive much individualized attention. Medication mistakes and hospital-acquired infections also are risks that patients take when they are admitted to a hospital. Many people would prefer an alternative, if possible, particularly if they have a serious illness to recover from or a terminal condition. Some individuals may be eligible for home-based care.

People may mistakenly think that home care and hospice care are one and the same. In fact, home care and hospice are two distinct services that provide support to individuals with serious conditions. They share similarities, but they differ in

goals and eligibility.

Home care.

The main scope of home health care is curative. The goal is to help a patient recover from a surgery, injury or illness, according to Vitas Healthcare. Patients typically are visited by skilled nursing providers, physical therapists, speech-language pathologists or occupational therapists. How long home health care services last depends on the patient's needs and goals.

To be eligible for home coverage, patients have to meet certain criteria, such as being considered homebound. This means limited ability to leave the home without help. Service length depends on the needs of the patient and

frequency may decrease over time as the patient's health improves.

Hospice care.

Hospice care can be administered at home or in another setting, but it's different from other home care in that it is not curative. Patients who have terminal illnesses can be placed in hospice care. This care focuses on pain and symptom management for those who are not expected to live longer than six months. Hospice services can include help with personal care from a home health aide, skilled nursing, medical social work to help with advanced directives and insurance and bereavement counseling.

To receive hospice care, a



doctor must determine that the patient has less than six months to live if the illness will follow the typical course. Hospice patients do not have to be homebound, according to Amedisys, a provider of health care in the home.

Hospice visits typically increase over time as the patient's health declines.

Home health care and hospice care are services with different eligibility and modes of care designed to assist patients in home settings.

Signs that an aging driver might not be safe behind the wheel



Driving is often associated with independence. The freedom that comes with being a licensed driver is often noted when newly minted motorists get a driver's license. But the sense of independence that comes with being a licensed driver affects all motorists, including seniors.

Many seniors have spent half a century if not longer behind the wheel. That history undoubtedly makes it difficult for aging drivers to relinquish their keys should factors beyond their control

begin to jeopardize their ability to drive safely and thus pose a threat to themselves and others. In such instances, family members may need to step in and make difficult decisions for aging relatives in relation to their driving. Before that decision is made, families can keep an eye out for various signs that a loved one might no longer be safe behind the wheel.

• Frequent accidents or near misses: The National Institute on Aging (NIA) notes that aging drivers who are in

multiple vehicle crashes or near misses may no longer be safe to drive. Even drivers who are not at fault in a given accident may otherwise have been able to avoid being involved if not for diminished abilities behind the wheel. The NIA notes that slower reaction time and reflexes are two driving abilities that can diminish over time and that can increase the chances aging drivers are in an accident.

• Vehicle damage: Another sign an aging driver may be experiencing diminishing driving abilities is the presence of new dents or scrapes on a car. The NIA notes that stiff joints and muscles and difficulty seeing are some common age-related health conditions that can affect a driver's ability to safely operate a motor vehicle. When such problems begin to appear, drivers may experience difficulty navigating areas like parking lots and narrow streets that do not have ample shoulder space. The results can be vehicle damage like dents or scrapes.

• Increase in traffic tickets: The NIA suggests two or more traffic tickets or warnings within the last two years is a sign drivers' skills are diminishing.

• Anxiety about nighttime driving conditions and other motorists: Aging drivers who express anxiety about driving at night may no longer be safe to drive, especially after the sun goes down. Some aging drivers simply stop driving at night, which suggests they might be capable of driving safely during the day. In addition, drivers who have anxiety or make frequent complaints about other drivers' actions, including their speed and decision-making in regard to actions like lane changes, may be experiencing diminished abilities behind the wheel.

There's no universal age when older drivers should stop driving. But families can keep an eye open for various signs suggesting aging drivers are no longer safe behind the wheel.

Travel tips for adults over 50



Travel has long been viewed as a positive hobby that can pay short- and long-term dividends. Some of those benefits may surprise even the most devoted jet-setters. For example, a joint study from the Global Commission on Aging and the Transamerica Center for Retirement Studies found that women who vacationed twice a year had a considerably lower risk of heart attack than women who vacationed once every six years. The same study noted men who did not take an annual vacation had a 30 percent greater risk of heart disease than men who did vacation each year.

Traveling after 50 may necessitate a slightly different approach than it did when individuals were younger. Though adults over 50 can reap the same travel-related rewards they did when they were younger, some additional safety measures may be necessary at this point in travelers' lives.

requirements if you plan to travel overseas. The Health In Aging Foundation (HIAF) urges older travelers hoping to go overseas to identify vaccination requirements in countries they plan to visit. Make this part of your early planning, as the HIAF notes some countries require vaccinations be administered at least six weeks prior to entry. Information regarding travel-related vaccinations can be found on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <https://www.cdc.gov/travel/page/travel-vaccines>.

• Get a pre-trip medical checkup. A pre-trip medical checkup can ensure adults over 50 are healthy enough to travel. A doctor visit also can be a great opportunity to update vaccinations and discuss medications. It can be tricky to manage medications when crossing time zones and travelers can work out a schedule with their physicians to ensure they don't miss any doses. This also can be a good time to renew prescriptions to

ensure you don't run out while away from home. Work with your physician and pharmacist to create a list of prescription and over-the-counter medications you take, which the HIAF notes will make it easier to get through customs and get replacement medicines should you need them while traveling.

• Beware of deep-vein thrombosis (DVT) and how to avoid it. The Mayo Clinic notes DVT occurs when a blood clot forms in one or more of the deep veins in the body, typically in the legs. Lack of movement is a risk factor for DVT, which can affect immobile travelers during long flights, train rides or road trips. DVT risk can be reduced by getting up and walking around when allowed to do so on long flights or train rides. If you'll be driving long distances, make frequent pitstops to get out of the car and stretch your legs.

• Stay hydrated. The Cleveland Clinic notes that dehydration can cause dizziness, elevate a person's heart rate, contribute to swollen feet and muscle cramps and result in fatigue, among other side effects. Travel is exciting and it can be easy to forget to hydrate during engaging trips. But the HIAF recommends individuals bring a large bottle of water with them and drink even if they do not feel thirsty.

These simple safety precautions can protect travelers 50 and over from health issues that might not have posed as significant a threat when they traveled in years past.

WHAT IS SARA?
Established by WCCOA in 2025, SARA was created as a strategic extension of the Council's existing services. The program serves as a critical safety net for seniors facing short-term "shocks" to their budget—those sudden, unplanned expenses that can threaten a senior's independence, safety, or ability to remain in their home.

While the Council On Aging provides vital daily services, SARA is our "Rapid Response" fund. It is designed specifically for Wyandot County residents age 60+ who are facing short-term financial burdens that threaten their independence.

Is this a loan?
No. SARA is community-funded relief, designed to help, not add debt.

Is it confidential?
Absolutely. Your privacy and dignity are our highest priorities.

Funds are distributed on a case-by-case basis following an eligibility review and are subject to availability. To maintain the highest level of personalized service and privacy, applications for the SARA program must be picked up in person at the Wyandot County Council On Aging office.

HOW SARA HELPS:

- Utility Assistance:** Helping seniors keep essential services like heat, water, and electricity running.
- Home Repairs:** Addressing urgent maintenance issues that impact the safety of the residence.
- Vehicle Repairs:** Ensuring seniors have reliable transportation for medical appointments and daily needs.
- Emergency Situations:** Providing flexible support for unique, short-term hardships.

"We want our neighbors to know they don't have to face these burdens alone, SARA is here to ensure that a single bad week doesn't define a senior's future." — Terry Ratliff, WCCOA Executive Director

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

SARA isn't just about paying a bill; it's about preventing a "hurdle" from becoming a "hardship." This program is entirely supported by donations collected through our various fundraisers and community involvement. Your tax-deductible contribution to SARA doesn't just help us fund an account; you will have helped us preserve the safety and dignity of the generation that built Wyandot County. We invite you to reach out to us regarding opportunities to support this program.

DONATE LOCAL HEROES

PLEASE CALL US AT 419-294-5733 FOR MORE INFORMATION