



Prevent Senior

HospitalizationSM

NORTH AMERICAN RESEARCH REPORT



Introduction

Research conducted by Home Instead, Inc. indicates that the problem of preventable hospitalization of seniors is viewed as very to extremely serious by three-fourths (74.6%) of the North American nurses surveyed who specialize in senior care.

Those same nurses estimate that nearly half of senior hospitalizations (48.5%) can be prevented with early detection and intervention. In addition, the study indicates that families play a critical role in keeping their aging loved ones out of the hospital – with 99% of nurses saying that the role family plays is as important as the role played by health care professionals.

Delaying or avoiding medical care is the most common action by seniors that puts them at risk of needing hospitalization. In addition, not following medical orders can be a clear predictor of potential risk. Three of the top reasons seniors don't comply with doctor's orders – unwillingness to change ways, denial of health issues and apathy – are attitudinal.

Survey results, overall, indicated that unnecessary hospitalization of seniors puts them at great risk. Involvement of families is key to minimizing these events. Nurses surveyed recommended providing education and instructional resources as a means of reducing hospitalization.

To provide families with resources to minimize the major risk factors and to play an active role in hospitalization prevention, Home Instead, Inc. has created the Five Ways to Prevent Senior Hospitalizations guide. The guide focuses on the following five key actions to keep seniors safe at home, and out of the hospital through proactive and preventative measures:



Follow doctor's orders



Don't ignore symptoms



Reduce risks of falls and accidents



Stay active physically and mentally



Maintain a healthy diet



Each section of the guide outlines warning signs and risk factors, as well as specific preventative steps and resources. The goal of this guide is to strengthen the role families can play in hospitalization prevention, and to help them feel more confident about actions to keep their senior safe at home.

In addition, a web-based "Hospitalization Risk Meter" will help family caregivers tune into the habits of their senior loved ones in an effort to help them avoid the risks of hospitalization.

The guide and online resources can be accessed at [PreventSeniorHospitalizations.com](https://www.PreventSeniorHospitalizations.com).

Key Findings

Prevention is Possible

A survey of North American nurses confirmed that nearly half of senior hospitalizations (48.5%) are avoidable if preventative steps are taken.

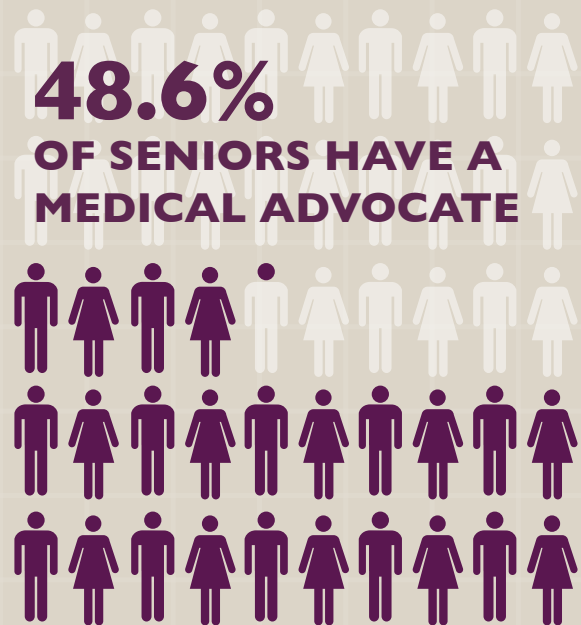
Three-fourths of nurses (74.6%) ranked the issue of preventable hospitalization as a very to extremely serious problem.

- **Nurses say the most important reasons to keep seniors out of the hospital are:**
 - They are at risk of hospital-acquired infections
 - Seniors who have been hospitalized have a hard time getting back into their routine
 - Hospitalization can cause more serious health declines
 - Hospitalization leads to confusion for seniors
 - Once hospitalized, seniors often do not regain full function
 - Immobility in the hospital puts seniors at risk
- **Following are the most important preventative measures that can help seniors avoid hospitalization:** (The percent refers to nurses who said each preventative measure is very to extremely important.)
 - Preventative healthcare – **99.6%**
 - Follow doctor's orders – **99.5%**
 - Keep doctor's appointments – **99.5%**
 - Manage chronic conditions – **98.8%**
 - Fix safety hazards at home – **98.8%**
- **Winter is the highest risk time of year for senior hospitalization, according to 82% of nurses, because of vulnerability to colds, the flu, pneumonia and other respiratory infections, and weather-related falls and accidents.**

Family is Key

99% of nurses agree that the family's role in keeping seniors healthy and out of the hospital is as important as that of the medical community.

Survey results show that less than half of seniors (48.6%) have a medical advocate.



The most important actions that families can take to help keep their senior parents out of the hospital are: (The percent refers to nurses who said each action is very to extremely important.)

- Make seniors home free of hazards – **99.1%**
- Ensure senior takes preventative health measures – **98.6%**
- Encourage them to use assistive equipment – **97.8%**
- Check in on them – **97.8%**
- Monitor medications – **97.3%**
- Attend doctor's visits – **97.1%**
- Assess their balance – **95.5%**
- Make sure they are safe to drive – **95.1%**

Top Risk Factors and Warning Signs

- The most common actions by seniors that can put them at risk of hospitalization are:
 - Waiting too long to see doctors
 - Mismanaging medications
 - Not following doctor's orders
 - Skipping preventative health measures
- The top lifestyle factors that could place seniors significantly more at risk of hospitalization are: (The percent refers to nurses who said each factor puts seniors significantly more at risk.)
 - Skipping health maintenance – **85.8%**
 - No one checking in on senior – **77.5%**
 - Being physically inactive/frail – **76.0%**
 - Living alone/isolation – **73.3%**
- The top health factors that can place seniors significantly more at risk of hospitalization are: (The percent refers to nurses who said each factor puts seniors significantly more at risk.)
 - Dementia/Alzheimer's – **88.3%**
 - Having 3 or more chronic health conditions – **86.8%**
 - Mobility issues – **78.3%**
 - History of hospitalizations – **73.5%**
- The most serious warning signs that could indicate that a senior is at risk of hospitalization are: (The percent refers to nurses who said each warning sign is very to extremely serious.)
 - They don't track medications – **99.8%**
 - They don't follow doctor's orders – **98.5%**
 - They show a major change in behavior – **97.6%**
 - They are isolated – **96.0%**

(Not) Following Doctor's Orders

43.5%

of nurses surveyed said the easiest step that seniors can take to prevent hospitalization is to follow doctor's orders.

Nurses estimate

47%

of seniors put off medical appointments or have problems accessing medical care.

- The most common barriers that prevent seniors from complying with doctor's orders are: (The percent refers to nurses who said each barrier is very to extremely common.)
 - Unwilling to change ways – **89.5%**
 - Dementia/Alzheimer's – **88.8%**
 - Denial of health issue – **86%**
 - Apathy – **84.6%**
 - Vision or hearing problems – **80.8%**



Research Methodology

In North America, Home Instead, Inc. completed a survey of nurses who work with seniors to better understand the risk factors that lead to hospitalization, as well as the role of families and caregivers in reducing the risk of hospitalization. Methodology for the survey was as follows:

- Home Instead, Inc. completed telephone interviews with a random sample of 400 nurses who work with seniors in North America (300 in the U.S. and 100 in Canada).
- The nurses surveyed worked in the following community-based settings:
 - Hospitals
 - Doctor offices/Clinics
 - Adult day care
 - Home health companies
- Telephone interviews were conducted between Sept. 18 and Oct. 10, 2014.



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