



## Comorbidity

Comorbidity is the simultaneous presence of two or more morbid conditions or diseases in the same patient, which may complicate a patient's situation.

### **Helen's 81-year-old mother has congestive heart failure and has been doing well living alone.**

Recently she developed a cough that just wouldn't go away. One night, Helen was called to the hospital, where her mother checked herself into the emergency room because she couldn't catch her breath. The doctor told them it was pneumonia, and she was admitted for a few days of care.

When talking to the doctor, he used a word that they had never heard: comorbidity. He explained that people with congestive heart failure are particularly vulnerable to infection, especially pneumonia and influenza. An infection often aggravates the underlying heart disease and leads to rapid, frequent recurrences of the congestive heart failure.

The explanation came with more information: Comorbidity is the simultaneous presence of two or more morbid conditions or diseases in the same patient, which may complicate a patient's situation. Discharge from the hospital is a critical transition point in a patient's care. Care transitions are especially important for elderly patients and other high-risk patients who have multiple comorbidities.

The local Home Instead Senior Care® office can assist seniors like Helen's mother, who is now recovering from pneumonia and congestive heart failure at home. Home Instead Senior Care can help a senior transition safely from the hospital or facility through the network's Returning Home<sup>SM</sup> Program.

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## Returning Home<sup>SM</sup>



## How a Home Instead CAREGiver can help

**Medication Reminders:** Dealing with two medical problems at the same time often calls for multiple prescriptions. A Home Instead CAREGiver can pick up new prescriptions and refills, and oversee medication reminders to help reduce the risk of a medication mishap. A Home Instead CAREGiver can also make a note of any reactions or side effects so they can be addressed during a doctor's appointment or, if needed, alert the doctor immediately.

**Nutrition Management:** Since diet is a major issue in dealing with congestive heart failure, a Home Instead CAREGiver can help with grocery shopping and meal preparation. Eating a reduced-salt diet is important in managing issues such as swelling in the ankles and legs. Preparing meals for a client offers opportunities to interact as well as a chance to observe and record the client's food intake.

**Exercise and Activity:** Congestive heart failure often will require a daily regime of simple at-home exercises to maintain health. A Home Instead CAREGiver can remind and encourage a client to stay on schedule with their exercises. Light housekeeping and assistance with bathing, dressing and toileting are other services that may be available.

**Excessive Emotional Stress or Depression:** It's not uncommon for a senior to become anxious or depressed after returning from the hospital; in fact, experts link depression and heart disease. A Home Instead CAREGiver's companionship can help with that aspect of comorbidity, and a Home Instead CAREGiver can alert family members or the client's doctor if signs of depression appear.

**Keeping Records:** Many senior loved ones will be required to record their weight in a diary every morning. A Home Instead CAREGiver can be instrumental in helping a senior track important measurables.

**Doctor Appointments:** Follow-ups with doctors are often required to ensure that older adults manage their conditions effectively. Trips to a cardiac rehabilitation program are often necessary. A Home Instead CAREGiver can track scheduled appointments, prepare a client for the trip and provide transportation.



For more information contact your local  
Home Instead Senior Care® office at  
888.484.5759  
or visit [ReturningHome.com](http://ReturningHome.com)

**Returning Home**<sup>SM</sup>