



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 had been doing well while living alone and managing her congestive heart failure.

But she recently caught a cough that just wouldn't go away completely. On a weekend night, Helen was called to the hospital, where her mother went to 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.

During his talk, the doctor used another 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. But, they asked, what about comorbidity?

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 her home. Home Instead Senior Care can help a senior transition safely from the hospital or facility through the network's Returning HomeSM Program.

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For more information contact your local Home Instead Senior Care® office at

888.484.5759 or visit **ReturningHome.com**

Returning HomeSM



How a Home Instead CAREGiver can help

Medication Reminders: Dealing with two medical problems at the same time often calls for multiple prescriptions. A CAREGiverSM can pick up prescriptions and refills, and oversee medication reminders to help reduce the risk of a medication mishap. A CAREGiver also could 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 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 CAREGiver can remind and encourage a client to stay on schedule with 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 loved one to become anxious or depressed after returning from the hospital; in fact, experts link depression and heart disease. A CAREGiver's companionship can help with that aspect of comorbidity, and a 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 weigh in every morning before breakfast and record it in a diary that can be shown to a health care provider. A CAREGiver can be instrumental in helping a senior track important measurables such as weight and consistency of exercising.

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



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