



SERVANT HOME CARE

CHRONIC CONDITION & HOSPITAL-TO-HOME SUPPORT

A FAMILY CAREGIVER GUIDE

7 Warning Signs Your Parent May Be Headed Back to the Hospital

How to recognize the subtle changes that come before a crisis — and keep your loved one safe at home.



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♥ PREVENTING HOSPITAL READMISSIONS

7 Warning Signs Your Parent May Be Headed Back to the Hospital

A Professional Family Caregiver Guide to Preventing Hospital Readmissions



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Introduction

Most hospital readmissions are not sudden. Families often notice subtle changes days — or even weeks — before a crisis.

Bringing a loved one home from the hospital is often a relief. The crisis seems to be over, everyone is happy to be back home, and the focus shifts toward recovery. Unfortunately, for many seniors, the journey doesn't end when they leave the hospital.

According to healthcare research, millions of older adults are readmitted to the hospital every year within 30 days of discharge. Many of these readmissions are **preventable** when warning signs are recognized early and the right support is put in place.

As a family caregiver, you know your parent better than anyone. You are often the first to notice when something isn't right. A small change in appetite, confusion, breathing, mobility, or mood may seem insignificant at first — but these subtle shifts can be early indicators of a serious decline. The challenge is knowing which changes are normal and which ones require immediate attention.

Inside this guide, you'll learn

- Why hospital readmissions happen — and which seniors are most at risk
- The 7 critical warning signs to watch for at home
- Hospital red flags that require immediate action
- Practical steps to help your loved one stay safe and independent

The goal is simple: help your loved one remain healthier, safer, and more independent while reducing unnecessary trips to the emergency room and hospital.

2

THE BIG PICTURE

Why Readmissions Happen

Medication issues, falls, infections, dehydration, unmanaged chronic disease, and missed follow-up care are leading causes of readmission. Many families assume that once a senior leaves the hospital, they are fully recovered. In reality, **hospital discharge often marks the beginning of a vulnerable recovery period**, not the end of one.

📌 Older adults frequently return home with:

- New medications
- New diagnoses
- Reduced strength
- Increased fall risk
- Ongoing symptoms
- Follow-up appointments
- Dietary restrictions
- Oxygen or medical equipment

Managing all of these changes at once can quickly become overwhelming — especially for families balancing work, distance, and their own responsibilities.

👁️ What comes next

On the following pages are the **7 warning signs** that often appear before a hospitalization. Each one includes what to watch for, why it matters, and exactly what families should do.



THE 7 WARNING SIGNS

Shortness of Breath



Breathing difficulties should never be ignored in older adults — especially those with heart failure, COPD, asthma, or pneumonia. Many seniors won't complain; instead they slow down, avoid activities they enjoy, or become unusually fatigued.

Watch For

- Difficulty breathing while walking short distances
- Needing more pillows to sleep comfortably
- Shortness of breath while resting
- Wheezing or persistent coughing
- Increased use of oxygen
- Trouble finishing full sentences
- Bluish lips or fingertips

Why It Matters

Shortness of breath can signal worsening heart failure, fluid in the lungs, pneumonia, blood clots, or declining oxygen levels. Early intervention can often prevent an emergency room visit or hospitalization.

What Families Should Do

Call Servant Home Care for a **FREE assessment**. We build the care tasks you need into a specialized, individualized care plan to monitor these symptoms and collaborate with the physician to prevent them from worsening. If severe breathing distress occurs, **seek emergency medical care immediately**.



THE 7 WARNING SIGNS

Swelling or Rapid Weight Gain



Unexpected weight gain and swelling are common signs the body is retaining fluid — particularly concerning for seniors with heart failure, kidney disease, or cardiovascular conditions. A gain of just a few pounds may represent several pounds of excess fluid.

Watch For

- Swelling in feet, ankles, legs, or abdomen
- Tight-fitting shoes or clothing
- Puffiness around the eyes
- Sudden weight gain
- Increased fatigue
- Shortness of breath with swelling

Why It Matters

Fluid overload places added stress on the heart and lungs and is one of the most common reasons heart-failure patients are readmitted to the hospital.

What Families Should Do

Call Servant Home Care for a **FREE assessment**. We build the care tasks you need into a specialized, individualized care plan to monitor these symptoms and collaborate with the physician to prevent them from worsening. Our plans include monitoring your parent's weight alongside other symptoms. **Report a gain of 3 lbs in a day or 5 lbs in a week.**



THE 7 WARNING SIGNS

Medication Problems



Medication-related issues are one of the leading causes of preventable hospital readmissions among older adults. Many seniors leave the hospital with medication changes that can be confusing for both patients and caregivers.

Watch For

- Missed doses
- Taking medications incorrectly
- Running out of medications
- Duplicate medications
- Side effects: dizziness, nausea, weakness, confusion
- Difficulty understanding instructions

Why It Matters

Medication errors can worsen chronic illness, increase fall risk, cause dangerous interactions, and result in hospitalization.

What Families Should Do

Call Servant Home Care for a **FREE assessment**. We build the care tasks you need into a specialized, individualized care plan to monitor these symptoms and collaborate with the physician to prevent them from worsening. Plans can include televisits with our nurse practitioner to review medications, reasons for taking them, reminders, and more.



THE 7 WARNING SIGNS

Falls and Mobility Changes



A fall is rarely “just a fall.” Falls often indicate a significant underlying change in health status and may be the first sign of a worsening medical condition.

Watch For

- New difficulty walking
- Increased need for assistance
- Shuffling gait
- Weakness or loss of balance
- Holding onto furniture while walking
- Recent falls or near-falls

Why It Matters

Falls can lead to fractures, head injuries, loss of independence, and hospitalization. They may also signal medication issues, dehydration, infection, or neurological changes.

What Families Should Do

Call Servant Home Care for a **FREE assessment**. Our **Fall Prevention Program** includes fall logs, hazard checks, and physician collaboration. Every fall should be reported — even those without injury. We also evaluate the home for fall hazards.



THE 7 WARNING SIGNS

Confusion



Sudden confusion is never a normal part of aging. Changes in cognition often signal an underlying medical problem that requires immediate attention.

Watch For

- Increased forgetfulness
- Difficulty following conversations
- Unusual agitation
- Hallucinations or disorientation
- Sleeping significantly more than usual
- Personality changes

Why It Matters

Confusion can be caused by urinary tract infections, pneumonia, dehydration, medication reactions, low oxygen, blood sugar abnormalities, or stroke.

What Families Should Do

Call Servant Home Care for a **FREE assessment**. Our **Mental Status Program** watches for warning signs of confusion and altered mental status, with physician collaboration. Any sudden change in mental status should be reported to a provider promptly.



THE 7 WARNING SIGNS

Poor Nutrition & Dehydration



Good nutrition and hydration are essential for recovery after hospitalization. Many seniors struggle with appetite changes, difficulty preparing meals, swallowing issues, or simply forgetting to eat and drink.

Watch For

- Skipped meals
- Weight loss
- Dry mouth
- Dark urine
- Dizziness or weakness
- Increased fatigue
- Reduced fluid intake

Why It Matters

Poor nutrition weakens the immune system, delays healing, increases fall risk, and contributes to hospitalization.

What Families Should Do

Call Servant Home Care for a **FREE assessment**. We build nutrition, diet, and hydration into our individualized care plans, monitor eating habits, encourage hydration throughout the day, and address barriers to meal prep and grocery shopping.



THE 7 WARNING SIGNS

Missed Follow-Up Care



The days immediately following hospital discharge are critical. Many seniors leave with instructions to follow up with their physician, specialist, or therapist — and missing these visits raises the risk of readmission.

Watch For

- Missed appointments
- Transportation challenges
- Failure to schedule recommended visits
- Not understanding discharge instructions

Why It Matters

Follow-up appointments allow providers to review medications, monitor recovery, identify complications early, and adjust treatment before symptoms worsen.

What Families Should Do

Schedule appointments **before discharge** whenever possible and create a calendar of follow-up care. Servant Home Care can help coordinate visits and arrange transportation assistance.



EMERGENCY AWARENESS

Hospital Red Flags

Certain symptoms should never be ignored and may require emergency medical evaluation.

When in doubt, call 911.

1

Chest Pain

Pain, pressure, heaviness, or discomfort may signal a heart attack or other serious cardiac condition.

2

Severe Shortness of Breath

Struggling to breathe at rest, unable to speak in full sentences, or in respiratory distress.

3

Stroke Symptoms

Use the FAST acronym below — immediate treatment dramatically improves outcomes.

4

Loss of Consciousness

Any fainting, unresponsiveness, or loss of consciousness should be evaluated immediately.

5

New Inability to Walk

Sudden weakness, loss of coordination, or inability to stand may indicate stroke or serious illness.

6

Severe Confusion

Rapid mental status changes, severe agitation, or not recognizing family require urgent assessment.

Remember the stroke acronym — F.A.S.T.

F

Face drooping

A

Arm weakness

S

Speech difficulty

T

Time to call 911

5

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Readmission Risk Quiz

Check **Yes** or **No** for each item below. Add up every “Yes” response across all sections, then turn to the **Risk Score** on page 20 to understand your loved one's risk level and recommended next steps.

Hospitalization & Emergency Care

QUESTION	YES	NO
Hospitalized within the last 30 days	☐	☐
Hospitalized more than once in the last 6 months	☐	☐
Emergency Room visit within the last 30 days	☐	☐
Two or more ER visits within the last 6 months	☐	☐
Discharged from hospital, rehab, or SNF in last 30 days	☐	☐
History of avoidable hospitalization due to chronic illness	☐	☐

Section Score _____

Chronic Condition Risks

Heart Disease / CHF

QUESTION	YES	NO
Diagnosed with Congestive Heart Failure	☐	☐
Weight gain greater than 5 lbs in one week	☐	☐
Swelling in legs, ankles, or feet	☐	☐
Increased shortness of breath	☐	☐
Sleeps elevated due to breathing difficulty	☐	☐
Fatigue limiting daily activities	☐	☐

Respiratory Disease

QUESTION	YES	NO
Diagnosed with COPD, Asthma, or Chronic Lung Disease	☐	☐
Uses oxygen therapy	☐	☐
Increased use of inhalers or nebulizers	☐	☐
Recent respiratory infection	☐	☐
Difficulty walking due to shortness of breath	☐	☐

Chronic Conditions & Medications

Diabetes

QUESTION	YES	NO
Difficulty controlling blood sugars	☐	☐
Recent low blood sugar episode	☐	☐
Recent high blood sugar episode	☐	☐
Difficulty managing diabetic medications	☐	☐
Slow-healing wounds or ulcers	☐	☐

Section Score ————

Medication Management

QUESTION	YES	NO
Taking 5 or more prescription medications	☐	☐
Taking 10 or more medications	☐	☐
Missed medications during the past week	☐	☐
Difficulty understanding medication instructions	☐	☐
Difficulty obtaining medications	☐	☐
Recent medication changes	☐	☐
Requires assistance organizing medications	☐	☐

Section Score ————

Functional Status Risks

Activities of Daily Living (ADLs)

NEEDS HELP WITH	YES	NO
Bathing	☐	☐
Dressing / undressing	☐	☐
Grooming	☐	☐
Toileting	☐	☐
Transferring	☐	☐
Ambulating	☐	☐

Mobility & Fall Risk

QUESTION	YES	NO
Fall within the last 90 days	☐	☐
Two or more falls within 12 months	☐	☐
Uses walker, cane, or wheelchair	☐	☐
Reports dizziness	☐	☐
Difficulty climbing stairs	☐	☐
Unsteady gait	☐	☐

Section Score ———

Cognitive, Safety & Nutrition

Cognitive & Safety

QUESTION	YES	NO
Diagnosed dementia or Alzheimer's Disease	☐	☐
Frequently forgets medications	☐	☐
Frequently forgets appointments	☐	☐
Difficulty following physician instructions	☐	☐
Wandering or unsafe behaviors	☐	☐
Confusion has worsened recently	☐	☐

Section Score _____

Nutritional

QUESTION	YES	NO
Unintentional weight loss	☐	☐
Difficulty preparing meals	☐	☐
Skips meals frequently	☐	☐
Difficulty swallowing	☐	☐
Signs of dehydration	☐	☐

Section Score _____

Caregiver Support & Red Flags

Caregiver & Social Support

QUESTION	YES	NO
Lives alone	☐	☐
Limited family support	☐	☐
No primary caregiver available	☐	☐
Missed physician appointments	☐	☐
Transportation barriers	☐	☐
Reports loneliness or isolation	☐	☐
Difficulty managing healthcare needs independently	☐	☐

Section Score

Red Flag Conditions — Immediate Risk

If ANY item below is marked YES, immediate intervention should be considered.

INDICATOR	YES	NO
New or worsening shortness of breath	☐	☐
Chest pain or pressure	☐	☐
New weakness or stroke symptoms	☐	☐
Uncontrolled blood pressure	☐	☐
Uncontrolled blood sugar	☐	☐
Fever or infection symptoms	☐	☐
New confusion or altered mental status	☐	☐
Recent fall with injury	☐	☐

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YOUR RESULTS

Servant Home Care™ Risk Score

Add up your total “Yes” responses from every section, then find your range below for recommended next steps.

Total “Yes” Responses _____

Low Risk

0–9 pts

- ✓ Routine follow-up recommended

Moderate Risk

10–19 pts

- ✓ Home care consultation recommended
- ✓ Chronic disease education recommended
- ✓ Medication review recommended

High Risk

20–29 pts

- ✓ Skilled nursing assessment & care coordination
- ✓ Caregiver support services recommended
- ✓ Weekly monitoring recommended

Very High Risk

30+ pts

- ✓ Immediate intervention & Nurse Practitioner evaluation
- ✓ Comprehensive care management recommended
- ✓ Hospital readmission prevention plan recommended

7

MATCHED TO YOUR NEEDS

Prevention Recommendations

Based on your risk score, these are the Servant Home Care services that most often help families prevent readmissions. Check the ones that fit your loved one's needs.

Recommended Services

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☒ Medication Reminders | ☒ Chronic Disease Monitoring |
| ☒ Heart Failure Support | ☒ COPD Support |
| ☒ Diabetes Support | ☒ Fall Prevention Program |
| ☒ Personal Care Assistance | ☒ Meal Preparation |
| ☒ Transportation Assistance | ☒ Companion Care |
| ☒ Dementia Support | ☒ Caregiver Respite |
| ☒ Nurse Practitioner Consultation | |

Clinical Summary

Primary risk factors identified: _____

Recommended interventions: _____

ABOUT YOUR CARE PARTNER

Servant Home Care, LLC

Specialized care for seniors with complex chronic conditions — bridging the gap between chronic conditions and everyday living so your loved one can thrive at home.

Our Mission

Helping seniors remain safe, healthy, and independent at home while reducing avoidable hospitalizations and emergency room visits.

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The Safe at Home System™

Stabilize · discover risks and launch support | **Strengthen** · master daily care and monitor changes | **Sustain** · track outcomes and protect independence.

30-Day Prevention Checklist

The first 30 days after discharge carry the highest risk of readmission. These six daily habits make the biggest difference — post this where the whole family can see it.

☐ **Take medications exactly as prescribed**

☐ **Attend all follow-up appointments**

☐ **Monitor weight and symptoms daily**

☐ **Stay hydrated throughout the day**

☐ **Maintain a safe home environment**

☐ **Report new symptoms promptly**

Need help staying on track?

Servant Home Care can take these tasks off your plate — medication reminders, symptom monitoring, transportation, and physician coordination — so your family gains peace of mind.



SERVANT HOME CARE

CHRONIC CONDITION & HOSPITAL-TO-HOME SUPPORT

YOUR NEXT STEP

Grab Your **FREE** Assessment Today

Stop a readmission before it starts. Schedule your complimentary Safe at Home assessment and let our nurse practitioner-guided team build a plan that keeps your loved one safe at home.

CALL TO SCHEDULE

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