



What is Skilled Care?

Skilled care is health care given when you need skilled nursing or rehabilitative staff to manage, observe, and evaluate your care. Examples of skilled care include changing sterile dressing and physical therapy. It is given in a SNF (Skilled Nursing Facility). Care that can be given by non-professional staff is not considered skilled care. People do not usually stay in a SNF until they are completely recovered. Medicare covers certain skilled care services that are needed daily on a short-term basis (up to 100 days).

Skilled nursing and rehabilitation staff includes:

- registered nurses;
- licensed practical and vocational nurses;
- physical and occupational therapists;
- speech-language pathologists; and
- audiologists.

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You get skilled nursing care to:

- help improve your condition; or
- maintain your current condition and prevent it from getting worse.

You get skilled rehabilitation care to:

- help improve your condition within a predetermined time period; or
- set up a maintenance program designed to maintain your current condition and prevent it from getting worse.

Your daily assessments and skilled care start the day you arrive at the SNF. Medicare requires that your assessments be recorded periodically. The first recorded assessment must be within the first 5-8 days of your SNF stay. Medicare also requires the SNF to record assessments done on days 14, 30, 60, and 90 of your covered stay (until you are discharged or you have used all 100 days of SNF coverage in your benefit period).

An assessment includes gathering information about:

- your current physical and mental condition;
- your medical history;
- medications you are taking;
- how well you can do activities of daily living like getting dressed, combing your hair, walking, eating, and using the toilet;
- your speech;
- your decision-making ability; and
- physical limitations (like problems with your hearing or vision, paralysis after a stroke, balance problems, etc.).