

How to Choose a Rehabilitation Facility After Stroke

By Julia Schwarz

Choosing a rehabilitation facility after stroke can be difficult. There are many factors to consider when matching a stroke survivor to a facility, and stroke survivors may not have the time and energy to conduct this extensive research. We've put together a list of some quick tips and resources to help you find the best place for your situation.

What are my options?

Inpatient Rehabilitation Facilities (IRF):

Inpatient rehabilitation facilities are within hospitals, and offer a team approach to rehabilitation. Therapists and other healthcare providers meet frequently to discuss action plans for patients' recoveries. Patients who choose to go to an IRF must be well enough to participate in three hours of therapy every day. Medicare will cover up to 90 days in an IRF. Before choosing an IRF, it is important to investigate the facility's quality of care. Indicators, such as the rates of infection and pressure ulcers among patients, are good indicators of the IRF's quality of care.

Use this link to find and compare IRFs:

<https://www.medicare.gov/inpatientrehabilitationfacilitycompare/>

Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNF):

A SNF is a good option for people who need a rehabilitation facility, but would find it difficult to complete three hours of rehabilitation a day. Medicare will usually cover up to 100 days in a SNF. Check out <https://data.medicare.gov/Nursing-Home-Compare/Star-Ratings/ax9d-vq6k> to compare specific quality measures for skilled nursing facilities.

Home Care:

Some patients may wish to be discharged from the hospital and receive care either from home health agencies or from a rehabilitation center as an outpatient. Medicare covers 60 days of home health services.

How do they compare?

Although IRFs may not be the right fit for everyone, research has shown that receiving care at an IRF after an arterial ischemic stroke is associated with higher survival rates and a lower rate of rehospitalization compared with receiving care at SNFs [\(1\)](#).

What Should I Look For When Choosing a Facility?

A good place to start when choosing a facility is getting a referral from a friend, relative or a doctor. Hearing about another patient or doctor's experiences at a rehabilitation facility can be incredibly helpful in making your choice. This is also a good time to ask your doctors the kinds of rehabilitation services that you should look for in a facility. Ask at the facilities you are considering both if they have those services and how often each patient gets to use them. Make sure that you discuss with the rehabilitation facility how long your insurance plan will cover care there. Finally, the end goal for a rehabilitation facility is to prepare you for the transition home. Ask a facility how they work with you help you make the transition home.

Sources:

1. Janet Prvu Bettger LL, Ying Xian , Eric D Peterson , Cheryl Bushnell , Pamela W Duncan , Jerome J Federspiel , Joel Stein , Cris Montalvo , Barbara J Lutz, Helen Hoenig, Lee H Schwamm , Jingjing Wu , Judith Stafford , and Laine Thomas. [Inpatient Rehabilitation Facility Care Reduces the Likelihood of Death and Rehospitalization After Stroke Compared with Skilled Nursing Facility Care.](#) Stroke. 2015;46(suppl_1).