

## **Tips on Selecting Home Medical Equipment**

In an ideal world, you will think that that upon discharge from the hospital, your senior loved one will be absolutely ready to resume normal activity. But in most cases, more recovery time is usually needed and you may need to purchase medical equipment for use while your loved one finishes his or her recuperation at home.

The hospital's medical staff and social worker may give you a list of equipment and materials you will need. In addition, they can let you know whether a prescription is required (e.g. home oxygen) and if insurance will generally cover the costs.

The following are possible medical supplies that your loved one could need at home depending on their condition:

- Cane
- Wheelchair
- Hospital Bed
- Walker
- Raised Toilet Seat
- Shower Chair
- Grab Bars
- Colostomy care supplies
- Oxygen
- IV equipment
- Respirator
- Disposable Gloves
- Incontinence Briefs

Some of these items, such as walkers, wheelchairs and hospital beds, are reusable and considered “durable medical equipment.” Anyone who has Medicare Part B can get durable medical equipment as long as the equipment is deemed medically necessary.

Some of the more expensive equipment may be rented instead of purchased. In fact Medicare may require rental over purchase. In the instance where you have a choice, the American Elder Care Research Organization in its online article, [“When to Rent vs. Buy Home and Durable Medical Equipment”](#) suggests that you consider a few things before you make your decision:

- Consider the length of time you will need the equipment and compare the rental costs over that time versus the upfront costs for full purchase.
- If you purchase, determine how easy or difficult it will be to resell the equipment once your senior loved one no longer needs it.
- Rental agreements often cover maintenance and repair, but a purchase may not come with such a warranty. Consider the technical level of the equipment—those with more electronics might require frequent maintenance which could increase costs.

- If your senior lives in different locations over the course of the year, think about the costs to transport purchased equipment versus renting materials at each location.

Look at your senior loved one's [budget](#) and see if it can support a high upfront cost or if lower monthly payments would be more manageable. If the budget is tight, consider seeking assistance from Veteran's associations, healthcare foundations and other state and local nonprofits.

Once you're ready to get the equipment, ask your senior loved one's healthcare providers for references for local and trusted medical equipment suppliers. You can then work with your vendor to make sure the equipment is delivered and in working order prior to your loved one's discharge from the hospital.

By having everything ready in advance for your loved one's return you will help ensure a more comfortable transition home.