

Half Of Senior Hospitalizations Can Be Prevented

(NAPSA)—Approximately half of hospitalizations among older Americans could be prevented, according to a new study of nurses who work primarily with seniors.

There are five simple steps that can help reduce the potential risk that an older adult will end up in the hospital. He or she should be sure to:

1. Follow doctors' orders. Two in five nurses say one of the easiest ways to help prevent hospitalization is to follow doctors' orders.

2. Not ignore symptoms. It's better to be safe than sorry when it comes to abnormal aches and pains. Yet 27.5 percent of the nurses surveyed said waiting too long to see a doctor is the most common thing seniors do that puts them at risk.

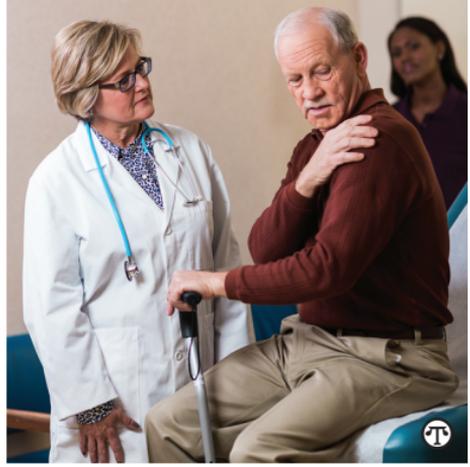
3. Take proper precautions to reduce risks of falls and accidents, including balance exercises, handrails and proper lighting.

4. Stay active physically and mentally.

5. Maintain a healthy, balanced diet.

Most important, however, according to respondents, is family. Ninety-nine percent of nurses polled said the role that families play in keeping seniors out of the hospital is just as important as that of the medical community. Fewer than half of seniors have a medical advocate, however, a role primarily filled by family members.

"Preventing hospitalizations among seniors is critical, as a hospital stay often leads to more serious health declines," explains Jeff Huber, president of Home Instead, Inc. "Because we continually see this decline among hospitalized seniors, the Home Instead Senior Care network is introducing new resources for families and seniors in an effort to help decrease hospitalizations so that seniors may



Older Americans can have longer, better lives if they and their families follow five simple steps.

remain at home and healthy year-round."

The "5 Ways to Prevent Senior Hospitalizations" guide—developed by the organization with Dr. Carolyn Clevenger, incoming president of the Gerontological Advanced Practice Nurses Association—can help families identify and act on potential warning signs. It's free at www.preventseniorhospitalizations.com and includes information about common risk factors and the steps that families can take to help ensure a healthy lifestyle.

In addition, a Web-based "Hospitalization Risk Meter" can help family caregivers tune in to the habits of their senior loved ones in an effort to help them avoid the risks of hospitalization.

Additional free resources include information on potential hazards to address in senior homes, preventative health measures that seniors can begin immediately, tips for medication management, balance assessment techniques and fall prevention tips.

For more information, visit www.preventseniorhospitalizations.com.