

# What is the difference between Acute Rehabilitation and Skilled Nursing care?

The key differences are:

SERVICES	ACUTE REHAB	SNF
Physician Visits	7 days/week	1 visit within 1-7 days, then 1 every 30 days
Type of Physician/ Practitioner	Physiatrist (Rehab Physician) and Internal Medicine – 24-hour availability	Geriatrician, internist, family practitioner, nurse practitioner – limited availability
Specialists	All specialties readily available – Neurology, Pulmonary, Cardiology, Nephrology, etc.	Limited specialist availability
3-Night Hospital Stay Required?	Never	Always
Radiology & Lab	On site	Limited- usually contracted service
Hours of Nursing Care	6 hours direct care daily, 24-hour availability	2 – 3 hours direct care daily, primarily CNAs
Nursing Skill Mix	Professional registered nurses specializing and certified in Rehabilitation Nursing	Non-professional nursing assistants certified in long-term care with LVN and RN supervision
Nurse to Patient Ratio	1 Nurse per 6-7 patients	1 Nurse per 20+ patients
Level of Care	Complex medical care	Basic medical care
Typical Length of Stay	7 – 12 Days, depending on diagnosis	20 – 60 Days
Therapy Intensity	3+ hours daily, one-on-one therapy	30 minutes - 2 hours daily, group therapy setting
Physical Therapy & Occupational Therapy	Registered Physical & Occupational Therapists	Physical Therapy Assistants, Aides, and Occupational Therapy Assistants deliver much of the care
Speech Therapist	Full time	Limited
Accreditation	Joint Commission Accreditation	None

Following hospitalization for a serious illness or injury, you may face a decision on whether to continue your recovery at an inpatient rehabilitation hospital or a skilled nursing facility. Understanding the difference between these two levels of care is crucial during the post-acute planning phase, as it can determine whether or not you maximize your medical and functional long-term recovery.

The high level of hospital care given in the acute rehab setting cannot be found at a lower level of care, such as a nursing home or skilled nursing facility. Studies show that patients treated in an acute rehabilitation hospital have better outcomes, go home earlier, and are less likely to be readmitted to the hospital.

Some skilled nursing facilities will call themselves a “rehab” facility, however they do not provide the same level of service as “acute hospital rehab.”

