



Shepherd  
Center

# Top 10 Things

**to Ask** When Choosing a  
Rehabilitation Program  
for Spinal Cord Injury,  
Brain Injury, or Stroke

**BEST**  
HOSPITALS

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# You're Facing an Important Choice

**A spinal cord injury, brain injury, or stroke can feel overwhelming for you and your loved one. Right now, you're focused on what matters most: recovery.**

Choosing the right rehabilitation program is a big part of that journey. It can feel confusing, but you're not alone. You have options, and you have the power to make the best decision for your family.



## You Have the Power to Choose Your Rehabilitation Facility

It's natural to look to your physician for guidance. But the best path to recovery happens when **you and your loved one** take an active role in the decision. **This is your choice**, and you have every right to explore what's best for your family.

**You have the right to choose and advocate for yourself or a loved one, so you'll want to do the following:**



**Research** the rehabilitation programs and specialists recommended to you.



**Explore all options**, even those not yet discussed.



**Ask questions** and seek a second opinion if something doesn't feel right.



**Request referrals** to the programs you believe are the best fit.



## Choose a Rehabilitation Program that fits your needs

Your rehabilitation provider can influence how much function you regain, whether you return home, and how you adjust to life after an injury. Your family also needs support and training so they can help you throughout your recovery.

You deserve a program that understands your personal goals and supports your journey.

Take time to find a place that feels right for you and your family.



# Top 10 Questions

## To Ask When Choosing a Rehabilitation Program for Spinal Cord Injury, Brain Injury, or Stroke

As you explore your options, ask these key questions:

### 1 Is spinal cord injury (SCI), acquired brain injury (ABI) and/or stroke rehabilitation the facility's main focus?

Many rehabilitation hospitals treat a wide range of conditions, and not all specialize in SCI, ABI, or stroke. Ask how many new patients with these injuries the facility treats each year. Specialization matters for recovery.

### 2 Can they share rehabilitation outcomes data?

Success in rehabilitation isn't just about completing therapy. It's about results. Ask for data on:



**Percentage of patients who return to home instead of a care facility following treatment.**



**Improvements in mobility and self-care.**



**Rate of rehospitalization, which shows how well a facility prepares a patient and family for their return home through family training and transition support.**

→ See more clinical outcomes information at [shepherd.org/outcomes](http://shepherd.org/outcomes)

### 3 What do other patients and families say?

Firsthand experiences matter. Look for reviews, patient satisfaction scores, and stories from former patients and caregivers. Check social media and ask the facility to share survey results. Culture and quality of care make a big difference.

→ Read more at [shepherd.org/satisfaction](http://shepherd.org/satisfaction)



**Shepherd Center insights**

- Shepherd Center treats about **350 inpatients with spinal cord injury annually**, whereas a general, non-specialized rehabilitation program may only see a dozen cases a year.
- Shepherd treats about **425 inpatients with brain injury and 180 inpatients with stroke annually**.

#### Patients at Shepherd Center:

- **Return to their homes and communities after rehab at Shepherd at a rate of more than 90%,** compared to national average of about 70%.
- **Meet or exceed risk-adjusted expected values at discharge for mobility** and self-care at rates up to **15.1% higher** than the national benchmark depending on diagnosis.
- **Are rehospitalized for any reason at a rate of just 4.6% within 30 days of leaving** Shepherd Center.

- **95.8% of inpatients completing satisfaction surveys would recommend Shepherd Center** to others in need of rehabilitation care.

## 4 What is the average age of patients?

SCI, ABI, and stroke often happen to people in the prime of their lives. Ask about the typical age range of patients. This can help you understand whether the program is designed to support goals like returning to work, school, or family life.

 **Being around patients in your age range boosts camaraderie and support, as shown in our adolescent program, where teens connect and recover together.**

## 5 Does the facility offer comprehensive care?

Recovery from SCI, ABI, or stroke is complex. The best programs start the journey of restoring function as early as possible and don't stop at discharge from the hospital.



- At Shepherd Center, the average age of people with spinal cord injury is 41, with brain injury is 37, and with stroke is 52.

## 6 How much therapy will you receive?

Find out what types of therapy are offered and how often. More therapy often means more opportunities to regain function and independence.

- Patients at Shepherd Center engage in 3 to 7 hours of daily rehabilitation, spanning physical, occupational, speech, respiratory, recreational, psychological therapies, and others.

## 7 What is the average length of stay for patients like you?

For SCI, ABI, or stroke, shorter stays aren't always better. When an injury or illness is still recent, intensive rehabilitation is critical to making the most gains in function and independence. Ask if the typical length of stay is customized for each patient to make the most gains possible, or if the focus is on safe return to home or a less acute facility.

- The average length of stay in Shepherd Center inpatient programs is four to seven weeks.
- This may be followed by intensive outpatient day programs for two to eight weeks.

## 8 What's next for future treatments?

SCI and ABI are lifelong conditions. A facility that invests in research is committed to helping patients live better now and **in the future**. Ask what innovations are on the horizon.

- Research and clinical trials keep Shepherd Center at the forefront of advancing treatments, with about 75 studies underway at any time.

# 9

## Are there services for both the patient and family?

Recovery is a team effort.

Look for programs like recreational therapy, music therapy, and family counseling.

Ask how the facility educates families and whether housing is available for loved ones traveling from out of town.



**Shepherd Center insights**



### Shepherd Center offers:

- **Classes to teach caregivers** about the injury.
- **Peer support groups** for patients and families.
- There are housing options for family members of patients who are admitted to one of our inpatient rehab programs. **Please contact us to learn more.**

→ Visit [shepherd.org](http://shepherd.org) for more details.

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## Will your care team stay connected after discharge?

Recovery doesn't end when you leave the hospital.

Ask if the facility offers follow-up outpatient care, peer support, online resources, and classes that keep you and your family supported long after your stay.

- Shepherd Center offers **added support after discharge**, connecting patients and families with **outpatient services, transition support, peer support, and health and wellness resources** for alumni and the community.

→ Visit [shepherd.org](http://shepherd.org) for more details.

## Why Choose Shepherd Center?

Shepherd Center is recognized worldwide for its expertise in spinal cord injury, brain injury, and stroke rehabilitation. Here, you'll find more than care — you'll find hope. Our approach is intensive, individualized, and specialized, giving you access to therapies and support you won't find anywhere else.





## What are the Next Steps?

- 1 Review your options with your physician and case manager.** Together, decide which rehabilitation program feels right for you.
- 2 Your care team will submit a referral** to the facility (or facilities) you believe will provide the best care.
- 3 Each facility will do a patient evaluation** and determine if and when they can admit you.
- 4 Expect communication during this process.** It can take several days to several weeks, depending on your situation. The rehabilitation team will contact you or your case manager for more information and keep you and your care team informed.

Learn More about Shepherd Center  
Through our Stories of Hope

**Watch Now →**

[shepherd.org/stories-of-hope](http://shepherd.org/stories-of-hope)



**At Shepherd Center, dedicated Access Case Managers are your main point of contact during this evaluation period, and will be available via phone and email.**

Consistently ranked as one of the nation's top hospitals for rehabilitation by *U.S. News & World Report*.



## Have Questions?

We're here to help in any way we can.

Contact Us Today



Online  
[shepherd.org/  
admissions](http://shepherd.org/admissions)



Call  
404-620-1399