

# When Your Loved One Is Being Discharged From the Hospital

Adapted from [www.nextstepincare.org](http://www.nextstepincare.org), United Hospital Fund.

## Questions to ask...

Some Basic Questions for Caregivers to Ask

### Questions about the illness:

- ◆ What is it and what can I expect?
- ◆ What should I watch out for?
- ◆ Will we get home care and will a nurse or therapist come to our home to work with my relative? Who pays for this service?
- ◆ How do I get advice about care, danger signs, a phone number for someone to talk to, and follow-up medical appointments?
- ◆ Have I been given information either verbally or in writing that I understand and can refer to?
- ◆ Do we need special instructions because my relative has Alzheimer's or memory loss?

### Questions about what kind of care is needed:

- ◆ Bathing
- ◆ Dressing
- ◆ Eating (are there diet restrictions, e.g., soft foods only? Certain foods not allowed?)
- ◆ Personal Hygiene
- ◆ Grooming
- ◆ Toileting
- ◆ Transfer (moving from bed to chair)
- ◆ Mobility (includes walking)
- ◆ Medications
- ◆ Managing symptoms (e.g., pain or nausea)
- ◆ Special equipment
- ◆ Coordinating the patient's medical care
- ◆ Transportation
- ◆ Household chores
- ◆ Taking care of finances

### Questions when my relative is being discharged to the home:

- ◆ Is the home clean, comfortable and safe, adequately heated/cooled, with space for any extra equipment?
- ◆ Are there stairs?
- ◆ Will we need a ramp, handrails, grab bars?
- ◆ Are hazards such as area rugs and electric cords out of the way?
- ◆ Will we need equipment such as hospital bed, shower chair, commode, oxygen tank? Where do I get this equipment?
- ◆ Who pays for these items?
- ◆ Will we need supplies such as adult diapers, disposable gloves, skin care items? Where do I get these items?
- ◆ Will insurance/Medicare/Medicaid pay for these?
- ◆ Do I need to hire additional help?

### Questions about training:

- ◆ Are there special care techniques I need to learn for such things as changing dressings, helping someone swallow a pill, giving injections, using special equipment?
- ◆ Have I been trained in transfer skills and preventing falls?
- ◆ Do I know how to turn someone in bed so he or she doesn't get bedsores?
- ◆ Who will train me?
- ◆ When will they train me?
- ◆ Can I begin the training in the hospital?



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## Questions when discharge is to a rehab facility or nursing home:

- ◆ How long is my relative expected to remain in the facility?
- ◆ Who will select the facility?
- ◆ Have I checked online resources such as [www.Medicare.gov](http://www.Medicare.gov) for ratings?
- ◆ Is the facility clean, well kept, quiet, a comfortable temperature?
- ◆ Does the facility have experience working with families of my culture/language?
- ◆ Does the staff speak our language?
- ◆ Is the food culturally appropriate?
- ◆ Is the building safe (smoke detectors, sprinkler system, marked exits)?
- ◆ Is the location convenient? Do I have transportation to get there?

For longer stays:

- ◆ How many staff are on duty at any given time?
- ◆ What is the staff turnover rate?
- ◆ Is there a social worker?
- ◆ Do residents have safe access to the outdoors?
- ◆ Are there special facilities/programs for dementia patients?
- ◆ Are there means for families to interact with staff?
- ◆ Is the staff welcoming to families?

## Questions about medications:

- ◆ Why is this medicine prescribed? How does it work? How long will the medicine have to be taken?
- ◆ How will we know that the medicine is effective?
- ◆ Will this medicine interact with other medications? prescription and nonprescription? or herbal preparations that my relative is taking now?
- ◆ Should this medicine be taken with food? Are there any foods or beverages to avoid?
- ◆ Can this medicine be chewed, crushed, dissolved, or mixed with other medicines?
- ◆ What possible problems might I experience with the medicine? At what point should I report these problems?

- ◆ Will the insurance program pay for this medicine? Is there a less expensive alternative?
- ◆ Does the pharmacy provide special services such as home delivery, online refills or medication review and counseling?

## Questions about follow-up care:

- ◆ What health professionals will my family member need to see?
- ◆ Have these appointments been made? If not, whom should I call to make these appointments?
- ◆ Where will the appointment be? In an office, at home, somewhere else?
- ◆ What transportation arrangements need to be made?
- ◆ How will our regular doctor learn what happened in the hospital or rehab facility?
- ◆ Whom can I call with treatment questions? Is someone available 24 hours a day and on weekends?

## Questions about finding help in the community:

- ◆ What agencies are available to help me with transportation or meals?
- ◆ What is adult day care and how do I find out about it?
- ◆ What public benefits is my relative eligible for, such as In-Home Supportive Services or VA services?
- ◆ Where do I start to look for such care?

## Questions about my needs as a caregiver:

- ◆ Will someone come to my home to do an assessment to see if we need home modifications?
  - ◆ What services will help me care for myself?
  - ◆ Does my family member require help at night and if so, how will I get enough sleep?
  - ◆ Are there things that are scary or uncomfortable for me to do, e.g., changing a diaper?
  - ◆ What medical conditions and limitations do I have that make providing this care difficult?
  - ◆ Where can I find counseling and support groups?
  - ◆ How can I get a leave from my job to provide care?
  - ◆ How can I get a respite (break) from care responsibilities to take care of my own healthcare and other needs?
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