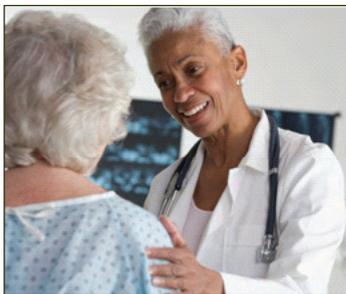


# GUIDELINES FOR A HOSPITAL STAY

For Patient, Family, & Caregiver



## How to have safe and successful health care at the hospital

Whether you were admitted to the hospital because of an illness or injury, or have planned a hospital stay for surgery or testing, being in any hospital can be an overwhelming experience for you and your family.

But no matter your level of anxiety or concern, there are a number of things you can do to participate in your care and to help achieve the health care outcomes you desire.



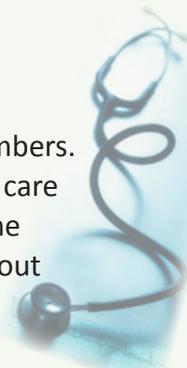
### Don't Hesitate to Communicate

First and foremost, talk to your doctor and all members of the hospital staff. Tell them how you feel and if you are experiencing any pain or other symptoms.

Let them know about all the medicines, vitamins, or other remedies you take. Tell them about all the illnesses you currently have or have experienced in the past as well as anything that might keep you from following your prescribed treatment plan.

### Be a Team Player

Every team assigns specific responsibilities to team members. As a member of your health care team, it is your role to ask the doctor and hospital staff about your illness or injury.



It is your responsibility to learn about your diagnosis, know what you need to do about it, and understand why it is important to follow the treatment plan.

Don't be afraid to ask questions, to ask the staff to repeat the directions, or to provide written directions for you. And, if you have a specific concern or problem, tell a member of your health care team.

Although this information does not include every question or topic you may need to discuss with your health care team, it can help you play an active role in your care at the hospital and understand what you may need to do after you leave the hospital.

***Remember, you are the MOST Important member of your health care team!***



## STEP 1: PREPARING FOR YOUR HOSPITAL STAY

- Review with your doctor why you are being hospitalized — your diagnosis, any planned tests, and who will be in charge of your care while you are in the hospital.
  - If you need or want a family member, caregiver, or friend to act as an advocate for you while you're hospitalized, ask the person in advance and inform your doctor and admitting health care professionals.
- Take these items with you to the hospital:
  - ◆ Personal identification with your photo (such as a driver's license).
  - ◆ Health insurance card(s) and, if needed, referral form.
  - ◆ A up-to-date list of all medications you are currently taking, including prescription and non-prescription medicine, supplements, vitamins, herbs, etc. Give the list to the hospital.
  - ◆ A list of allergies or sensitivities to any medicine.
  - ◆ Results for tests done six weeks or less prior to hospitalization.
  - ◆ Advance directive, if you have one (if you do not, it is strongly recommended that you complete one).
  - ◆ Health care decision-makers you may have appointed, or who you desire to make decisions for you if you are unable to make them for yourself.

## STEP 2: WHILE YOU ARE IN THE HOSPITAL

- Ask your health care team the following questions:
  - ◆ Who can I talk with if I have questions about my treatment—for example, if I don't understand my treatment plan, who will direct my care, what will happen next, or when it will happen?
  - ◆ What can I do if I feel my health concerns are not being handled in a timely, respectful manner—for example, if I do not feel my pain is being controlled? *(Note: The hospital should provide a list describing your patient rights. Many hospitals also have patient advocates.)*
  - ◆ How can my loved ones and I reduce risks (such as falls, medicine mistakes, and infections) while I am in the hospital?
- If your health insurance is provided through Medicare, did you receive the document "An Important Message from Medicare"?
- Moves within the hospital (transitions of care) require cooperation among you, your loved ones, and your health care team. Be sure to ask where you are moving (for example, from ICU to a Step Down Unit), when, why, and who will be in charge of your care during and after the move.

## STEP 3: BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE HOSPITAL

- Ask your nurse when your doctor will be by to discharge you. Be prepared to ask your doctor any questions you want to know, such as:
  - ◆ What treatment you received, and why.
  - ◆ What recovery may be like (length, how you may feel).
  - ◆ What you need to do to take care of your health, such as caring for a wound or incision, changing your diet, limiting activities, and making follow-up appointments.
  - ◆ A current list of medicines and their instructions. Expect a clear message regarding specific meds you should continue to take, which meds you should stop taking and any new medications that are important to the management of your disease or injury.
- Expect information about and ask for explanations of warning signs you might experience after your discharge that warrant contacting your doctor.
- Upon being admitted, ask your social worker, case manager, or nurse about any help you may need upon leaving the hospital, with such things as bathing, dressing, meals, or medical equipment, and who can help you arrange the services.
- Notify the medical staff of any responsibilities you may have, such as caregiving or babysitting for others.
- If possible, have a family member, caregiver, or friend with you when talking with your doctor, nurse, case manager and social worker before leaving the hospital.
- Review the guide, [Taking Care of MY Health Care](http://www.ntocc.org), available at [www.ntocc.org](http://www.ntocc.org). The questions included there may assist you and/or your caregiver to be an active participant in your continuing health care plan.

## STEP 4: WHEN YOU ARE AT HOME

- Review all discharge information, including:
  - ◆ When to make appointments with doctor(s), clinics, testing facility, who will be treating you after discharge.
  - ◆ What follow-up tests or treatments are necessary and how to arrange them.
  - ◆ A list of all the medicines you need to take, including prescription medicine, over-the-counter medicine, or vitamins, herbs, or supplements.
- Understand how the prior medications you were taking fit in with the new medication list; which should be stopped, which continued, which continued but in a different dose or frequency.
- Report symptoms of disease recurrence or complications of your disease, injury or treatment immediately to your doctor, home health nurse, or pharmacist.
- Contact your doctor if you have problems managing your illness or questions about your treatment plan, such as needing help at home, making and keeping appointments, and getting your medications.





# Taking Care of MY Health Care

A guide for you or your caregiver to be active in either your own health care or caring for someone else.

Take this with you each time you meet with a health care provider (such as a doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or social worker); visit a hospital, nursing center, or other health care facility; or receive care in your home. You have rights to your personal health information. Using this guide can help you keep track of your health information, and may prevent other health problems.

Visit With: \_\_\_\_\_

**BE SURE YOU KNOW THESE THINGS:** Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Why am I meeting with a health care provider today? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What medical conditions do I have? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Do I have a list of all the medicines I need to take, including all on the following list? **Important: Tell the health care provider any allergies or sensitivities you have to any medicine.**
  - \_\_\_ Prescription medicine (can buy only with a prescription)
  - \_\_\_ Over-the-counter medicine (can buy without a prescription)
  - \_\_\_ Vitamins, herbs, or supplements I take (such as St. John's Wort)
  - \_\_\_ Any NEW prescriptions I received during this visit
  - \_\_\_ Written directions on how to take all my medicines
  - \_\_\_ Major side effects of these medicines
4. Besides taking my medicines, what else do I need to do?
  - \_\_\_ Get blood tests or other medical tests? \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_ Get extra help or equipment at home? \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_ Avoid caffeine, alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs? \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_ Avoid eating certain foods? \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_ Eat certain foods? \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_ Change a bandage? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Which doctor or other health care provider will I see next and why?  
\_\_\_\_\_ How soon? \_\_\_\_\_  
How do I make an appointment? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Has my doctor sent a copy of my discharge plan or other information about my health (including all my medicine and other treatments) to my next health care provider or facility? **MAY I HAVE A COPY OF THAT INFORMATION TODAY?**
7. Do I need a referral for other health care providers, tests, or facilities?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
When should I expect the results from those tests? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Who should I call before my next appointment if I have questions or problems managing my care or dealing with my condition?

**Being sick can affect all areas of your life. If you have questions or concerns about any of the following, check the box and talk about them with a health care provider.**

- Alcohol, drug, or tobacco use
- Caregiving concerns
- Changes in behavior, memory or thinking
- Cultural customs affecting health care
- Financial or health insurance
- Home safety
- Medical equipment needs; or help with walking, bathing, eating, dressing
- Relationship/intimacy concerns
- Spirituality/religion
- Taking medicines
- Transportation & driving issues
- Understanding my illness or conditions

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **TELEPHONE #:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ON THE BACK OF THIS PAGE IS SPACE TO WRITE DOWN YOUR MEDICINES, QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS TO TAKE WITH YOU TO YOUR NEXT HEALTH CARE VISIT!**



# Taking Care of MY Health Care

A guide for you or your caregiver to be active in either your own health care or caring for someone else.

## MEDICINE LIST ★

### WHEN I GET UP, I TAKE:

Drug name- Brand name or generic & DOSE	This looks like? Color, shape	How many?	How I take it	I started taking this on: (date)	I stop taking this on: (date)	Why I take it	Who told me to take it (name)
<i>Example: Lisinopril 10 mg</i>	<i>Round yellow pill</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>By mouth with breakfast</i>	<i>June 3, 2008</i>	<i>Keep taking</i>	<i>High blood pressure</i>	<i>Dr. Smith</i>

### IN THE AFTERNOON, I TAKE:


### IN THE EVENING, I TAKE:


### BEFORE I GO TO BED, I TAKE:


### OTHER MEDICINES THAT I DO NOT USE EVERYDAY:


### QUESTIONS I WANT TO TALK ABOUT WITH MY HEALTH CARE PROVIDER AT MY NEXT VISIT:


# HELPFUL DEFINITIONS

*To Help You Better Understand Your Health Care*



## **Advance Directive:**

Legal documents that allow you to convey your decisions about end-of-life care ahead of time.

## **Case Manager:**

Case managers work with people to get the health care and other community services they need, when they need them, and for the best value.

## **Hospitalist:**

Doctor whose primary professional focus is the general medical care of hospitalized patients. Activities include patient care, teaching, research, and leadership related to hospital medicine.

## **Nurse Practitioner:**

Registered nurses who are prepared, through advanced education and clinical training, to provide a wide range of preventive and acute health care services to individuals of all ages.

NPs take health histories and provide complete physical examinations; diagnose and treat many common acute and chronic problems; interpret laboratory results and X-rays; prescribe and manage medications and other therapies; provide health teaching and supportive counseling with an emphasis on prevention of illness and health maintenance; and refer patients to other health professionals as needed. ([www.acnpweb.org](http://www.acnpweb.org))

## **Palliative Care:**

Serious illnesses can cause physical symptoms, such as pain, nausea, or fatigue. You may also have psychological symptoms like depression or anxiety. The treatments for your disease may cause symptoms or side effects. Palliative care relieves symptoms without curing your disease. ([www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/palliativecare.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/palliativecare.html))

## **Patient Advocate:**

A person who helps a patient work with others who have an effect on the patient's health, including doctors, insurance companies, employers, case managers, and lawyers. A patient advocate helps resolve issues about health care, medical bills, and job discrimination related to a patient's medical condition. (American Cancer Society)

## **A Patient's Bill of Rights:**

Information to let patients know what their rights and responsibilities are while they are in the hospital. Most patient bills of rights stress the importance of strong relationships between patients and their health care providers and the key role patients play in staying healthy.

## **Pharmacist:**

Responsible for interpreting, evaluating, and implementing orders for medications, dispensing medications, and monitoring them for benefit and safety. In hospitals and other health systems, they serve as valuable sources of information on medications and frequently consult with other health care team members to optimize medication use.

## **Physician Assistants:**

Health professionals who practice medicine as members of a team with their supervising physicians. PAs deliver a broad range of medical and surgical services to diverse populations in rural and urban settings. As part of their comprehensive responsibilities, PAs conduct physical exams, diagnose and treat illnesses, order and interpret tests, counsel on preventive health care, assist in surgery, and prescribe medications. ([www.aapa.org](http://www.aapa.org))

## **Social Worker:**

These professionals help individuals and families cope with social and emotional factors affecting their health and well-being; diagnose and treat mental health problems; and help people obtain services.

## **Transitions of Care:**

Include situations in which a patient moves from a primary care doctor to a specialist, or moves within the hospital; moves from the emergency room to other hospital departments, such as surgery or intensive care; or when a patient is discharged from the hospital and goes home or to an assisted living arrangement or a skilled nursing facility.

