

SPEAK UP FOR BETTER SAFER HEALTH CARE

Planning your Recovery



What's in this brochure?

This brochure provides some helpful questions to assist you getting the information you need to be actively involved in your own post-discharge follow-up care.

What should I do before going to the hospital?

It is important to start planning your recovery even before you arrive at the hospital.

- > Find out if the hospital has a discharge planner, social worker or nurse who can help you plan your follow-up care. The hospital, your specialist or general practitioner can assist you with information and referrals.
- > Ask a family member or friend to help plan your follow-up care.
- > Take a notepad to the hospital to write questions, answers and reminders.

What should I do before leaving the hospital?

An important part of your recovery is ensuring you have everything you need before you leave the hospital. Make sure that a discharge summary is completed and that it will be sent to your nominated general practitioner and any other relevant treating doctor or specialist detailing your diagnosis and treatment. Request a copy of the discharge summary for your own records. This will help you and your general practitioner manage your ongoing healthcare.

Before leaving the hospital, you should be given written instructions about your post-discharge follow-up care.

What if I have trouble understanding the language used in the instructions?

Ask for a translation, an interpreter or patient advocate. An advocate helps patients understand their treatment and their choices.

If I feel overwhelmed by the post discharge follow-up care I need, what can I do?

Ask about referrals for home care services, home help services, meals-on-wheels, or a skilled nursing facility such as the Royal District Nursing Service. Find out about payment options, including whether financial assistance is available. Ask for contact details and telephone numbers prior to discharge.

Questions to ask about my condition

- > Do I know enough about my condition and the treatment that I have received? Do you have any written information?
- > How soon should I feel better after leaving the hospital?
- > Will I be able to walk, climb stairs, go to the bathroom, prepare meals and drive?
- > Are there activities I should avoid? If so, for what period of time?
- > Are there any special instructions for daily activities? For example, should I take a shower instead of a bath or avoid lifting heavy objects?
- > How much help will I need after I leave the hospital? Should someone be with me 24 hours a day? If so, has this been arranged?

- > What signs and symptoms should I watch for? Is there an information sheet that lists the signs or symptoms? If I have any signs or symptoms, what should I do?
- > Will I need any special equipment at home? Where can I get the equipment? Is it covered by my Medibank Private health insurance, Medicare, or other health plan or council based programs?
- > Is my condition or medication likely to increase my risk of falling? If so, what equipment can be installed to minimise the risk?
- > Will I need physiotherapy or occupational therapy? Are there any physical exercises I need to do? If so, ask for written instructions.
- > If I have wounds, how do I take care of them? Ask for written instructions. How long should it take to heal? If required, where can I get assistance to look after my wounds?
- > If I have stitches, when will they need to come out? Who should I follow-up with to remove them?
- > Will I need to have any follow-up tests? Who should I contact to get the test results?
- > Will I need to schedule any follow-up visits with my doctor?
- > When can I expect to go back to work?
- > Who can I call if I have any problems after leaving the hospital?
- > Can you supply me with a Medical Certificate for my employer?

Questions to ask about my medication

- > What medications will I need to take at home? Ask for a written list that includes all your medications —new and old. Take this list when you have follow-up care.
- > Can I get written instructions? Make sure you understand the instructions. If none are available ask your doctor or pharmacist to complete the written medication record on page 2.
- > Is there any medication that I was taking prior to admission that I should stop taking after I leave the hospital?
- > Is there any medication or vitamins I should not take with my current medication?
- > Are there any food or drinks—including alcohol—that I should avoid while I'm taking my medication?
- > Are there any potential side effects of my medication? What should I do if I experience side effects? Who can I contact?

Once you leave hospital, you may want further information about your condition to help you maximise your recovery and minimise the likelihood or severity of recurring illness. You can get further information about your condition from your GP, treating specialist or by calling the relevant contact for your state or territory.

