What to do when your family member is being discharged from the hospital

If a relative in your life is soon to be discharged from the hospital, it’s important to discuss their condition with the medical staff in advance to ease the transition. Try to get as much information as possible from the hospital while your relative is there, including advice and assistance on the help that will be needed when your relative returns home. The more prepared you are, the easier the transition will be for everyone.



Hospital admission can be distressing for everyone involved. You and your relative have been dealing with not only a medical condition, but also with adjustment to the hospital environment with numerous healthcare professionals, a strange routine and even sharing a room with strangers. Understand that the return home will likewise take adjustment. Here are some tips:

- Plan for your relative's return home well in advance of the discharge.
- Request an estimated date of discharge from the hospital. Knowing an approximate date will help you plan and prepare any services or alternative arrangements that will need to be made.
- The head nurse or floor manager may be able to help you with other patient-related concerns.
- Ask for an appointment with the social worker or discharge planner.

Hospital co-ordination

Hospital social workers or discharge planners are professionals who are there to help with this kind of situation. They will serve as a link between the patient and care providers, communicating regularly with other members of the healthcare team. They are also experts at identifying post-hospital needs by assessing the patient and their supports.

If medical equipment is required, hospital staff can arrange for it to be delivered to your relative's home prior to discharge. Depending on the medical condition, this may be provided at no cost for a specified period of time, with a date for review.

Community resources

If your relative's condition does not qualify for government-funded assistance in the home, ask for a list of private or volunteer resources in the community. You will probably be given a central contact number for community care services.

If your relative's mobility is affected, the hospital may arrange for a home visit by an occupational therapist to assess potential needs, including any recommended home adaptations.

Although making the transition from hospital to home can be one that requires adjustment, arrangements can be made to ease this transition. Be sure to remain in contact with hospital staff or your family’s physician regarding the ongoing care and recovery of the relative in your life. And, if required, don’t be afraid to ask for help.