

Need to Know for Patients and Families

What patients and their families need to know before hospitalization



Dementia Transition Series

Home to Hospital

Definition: Dementia is a decline in memory and other cognitive functions severe enough to interfere with daily functioning.

Why Is It Important? Transitioning from home to a hospital can be a difficult and stressful time, especially for those with dementia. The change to an unfamiliar environment with the added stress of an acute medical condition, needed treatments, increased stimulation in the hospital, and potential pain are likely to increase confusion. Knowing how to prepare can help relieve anxiety for the individual and caregiver.

What Can Patients and Caregivers Do?

1. As a caregiver, be proactive. Develop a plan that outlines the responsibilities and roles for each person involved in your loved one's care.
2. Patient or caregiver should pack a hospital kit with the following:
 - A written record of all patient medical information, including chronic health conditions, past surgeries, current medications
 - Notebook and pen which patient or caregiver can use to record/relay information.
 - Snacks, water, glasses, hearing aid, dentures, change of clothing and toiletries.
 - Favorite music, reading material, and comforting objects or photos from the patient's home.
 - Contact information for health care providers, family members and friends.
 - Copies of important documents including insurance cards, Medicaid card and/or Medicare card, Health Care Power of Attorney, and Advance Directives
3. Caregivers should decide the best way to tell their loved one about the hospitalization. Keep explanations simple and put the visit in a positive light.
4. If a hospitalization or surgery is planned ahead of time, patient or caregiver should ask for a pre-admission packet not already provided. This should outline tests the patient needs before admission (if known), where to go and what time to arrive on the day of admission, visiting hours, and payment information.
5. Develop a list of questions after reading through the pre-admission packet. Ask what to expect about:
 - Tests and procedures
 - Expected discharge placement
 - Length of stay
 - Potential problems
 - Whether an outpatient visit is an appropriate alternative to hospitalization
6. Caregiver should let the hospital know how they want to participate in care planning. Will caregiver or anyone be staying overnight with the patient? Who should be called with any updates or unexpected changes in condition if not present at the time?