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## Need to Know for Patients and Families

*What patients  
and their  
families need to  
know before  
hospitalization  
or a nursing  
home admission*

## Hearing

**Why Is It Important?** Communication with your health care providers is important. When hearing loss occurs, it can become difficult to communicate. The most common type of hearing loss among older adults is loss of ability to hear high frequency sounds. Hearing loss may be caused by aging, lifestyle such as working in a factory, or exposure to other loud noises over a lifetime. Challenges can include non-functioning hearing aids and background noise.

### What You Can Do:

1. Make sure your hearing aid is clean and has fresh batteries.
2. Ask your health care provider to make sure your ears are free of earwax.
3. Request use of a pocket amplifier.
4. Request an amplifier for your telephone.
5. Let your health care providers know if you cannot understand them. Ask them to repeat what they said or to say it differently. Ask people to talk slower and in a lower tone of voice.
6. Turn off the TV or the radio to decrease background noise.

### What the Family and Caregivers Can Do:

1. Tell health care providers that your loved one has hearing issues, especially if they don't have a hearing aid and need one, if they don't have their hearing aid with them in the hospital or nursing home, or if the hearing aid is not working.
2. Tell health care providers if your loved one hears better on one side than the other.
3. Close the door and turn off the TV to eliminate background noise.
4. Ask health care providers to write down important information in large print your loved one can read.
5. Request the use of pictures or communication boards.
6. Make sure medication directions are provided in written form.