Questions to Ask in Preparation for Discharge

**Things to Remember**

Plan and prepare as much as possible. Know that your input is important as a vital part of the health care team. Leave the hospital with a safe and adequate discharge plan that meets your needs. Learn, observe, and ask questions about patient care while the patient is still in the hospital. If you have any concerns about the tasks that you are asked to do at home, tell the health care team. Finally, ask for written discharge instructions (that you can read and understand) and a summary of the patient’s current health status.

**Preparing the home**

- Will the patient need medical equipment and where will they get it? (These may include a hospital bed, shower chair, commode, cane, wheelchair, oxygen, or a walker.)
- Will they need supplies and where will they get them? (These may include diapers, disposable gloves, or skin care items.)
- Will insurance pay for these equipment and supplies?
- Is the home comfortable and safe? Is there room for equipment and supplies? Is there a safe place for medications? Is there a dedicated place for important information?

**Home Care Services**

- Is the patient being referred for home care service? If so, what type? (These may include nursing care, physical therapy [PT], occupational therapy [OT], home health aide, and speech therapy.)
- Will insurance pay for these services?
- Do they have the necessary names and contact information for these services?

**Recovery**

- What kind of supervision will the patient need?
- What are problems to watch for, and what should the patient do about them? Who do they call if there are concerning symptoms?
- Are there support groups that might be helpful for the patient or caregivers?
Recovery continued

- What appointments and tests will the patient need in the coming weeks?
- What if the patient needs more help with in-home care, meals, transportation, or respite? Can the hospital recommend services?
- What services are recommended for emotional and psychological support?

Medication Management

- Were any medications stopped during the hospital stay? Should they be continued?
- What new medications will the patient be taking?
- How long should they take them?
- Should this medication be taken with meals? Certain times of the day?
- Does this medication have any side effects?
- Can it be taken with other medications?
- Will insurance pay for these medications? If not, are there other medicines that would work just as well and cost less?

Special Foods and Diet

- Are there certain foods that the patient can or cannot eat and drink?

Additional Resources:

- “Going Home: What You Need to Know” and “Hospital-to-Home Discharge Guide” at www.nextstepincare.org
- “Hospital to Home: Plan for a Smooth Transition” at www.eldercare.gov
- “Your Discharge Planning Checklist:” at www.medicare.gov

If you think you are being discharged too soon, you have the right to voice your concerns. At Cleveland Clinic, contact the Office of Patient Experience at 216.444.7500. At University Hospitals, contact Patient Care Advocates ext. 47502 or 216-884-7502 outside office hours. Patients with Medicare have additional options for appeals, which may be found at 1-800-MEDICARE or Medicare.gov.

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