

Caregiver Checklist: What To Ask When Your Elderly Parent Is Discharged From the Hospital

Hospital discharge planning is key. Experienced caregivers know that the time to develop the discharge plan is the minute your parent is admitted but those new to the role can find themselves scrambling to make post-hospital arrangements. Whether this is your first discharge experience or third, here's our guide of what to do when your elderly parent is discharged from the hospital.

About the Illness

- ✓ What is my parent's diagnosis?
- ✓ What is their prognosis?
- ✓ What symptoms/side effects should I watch out for?
- ✓ When should I call the doctor and which doctor should I call?
- ✓ When does the doctor want to see my parent again?
- ✓ Should I make any other appointments? By when?
- ✓ Are the doctors' appointments set up by the hospital or should I book them?

About Medication

- ✓ What is my parent's current medication list?
- ✓ Do any of these medications have a different name I should be aware of for ease of ordering?
- ✓ Are there side effects I should watch for?
- ✓ Do any of these medications need to be taken with or without meals?
- ✓ Can any medications or dosages be combined or eliminated?
- ✓ Do I need to order/pick up any prescriptions?
- ✓ Are these long-term prescriptions or temporary?
- ✓ Is my parent eligible for a nurse to sort his or her meds weekly?
- ✓ Is this covered by insurance?

About Transportation

- ✓ Will I transport my parent from the hospital or will he or she go by ambulance?
- ✓ Are there services to take him or her to follow on doctor's appointments?
- ✓ How do I access those resources?

About Follow-On Treatment

- ✓ What services does my parent require (physical therapy, occupational therapy, behavioral therapy, blood tests, wound care, etc.)?
- ✓ Will my parent receive home care and are these services covered?
- ✓ What care am I expected to provide?

- ✓ How will I be trained?
- ✓ Who will I call for help and to answer questions?
- ✓ Do I have this information in writing?

About Support

- ✓ Where can I get help with transportation for my parents?
- ✓ Where can I get help with meals for my parents?
- ✓ Are there support groups that will benefit me?
- ✓ What public benefits are available for my parent (Veteran's assistance, community assistance, etc.)?

About Personal Care

- ✓ Can my parent bathe and dress?
- ✓ Does he or she need assistance?
- ✓ Can I get an aide to help him or her and will insurance cover it?
- ✓ Can my parent exercise?
- ✓ How much exercise is too much?
- ✓ How much exercise is too little?
- ✓ Does my parent have any diet restrictions?
- ✓ Does my parent need any aids such as a walker or cane or wheel chair, a shower chair or commode seat, compression socks or disposable underwear?
- ✓ Will insurance cover these items?
- ✓ Where can I purchase these items?

About My Parent's Home

- ✓ Will my parent need to use the stairs and can they?
- ✓ Have I checked for any trip hazards like throw rugs, cords and clutter?
- ✓ Can they reach items like dishes, towels, and household supplies without reaching and straining?
- ✓ Is there a phone near their bed?
- ✓ Does my parent have flashlights handy in case of emergency?
- ✓ Will we need to retrofit anything (add a ramp, widen doorways, install grab bars in the bathroom)?
- ✓ Will insurance pay for any of that?

About Post-Hospital Placements

- ✓ How long is my parent expected to remain in the facility?
- ✓ Does the hospital select the facility?
- ✓ What is the criterion?
- ✓ Do I select the facility?
- ✓ What resources can help me with research?
- ✓ Have I checked www.Medicare.gov for the facility ratings?
- ✓ When is a bed available?
- ✓ Do I feel good about the facility?

About Me

- ✓ What level of care can I provide and how long can I sustain it?
- ✓ How will it impact my family and how can I address that?
- ✓ How will it impact my work and how can I address that?
- ✓ How can I build a care team? What family and friends can I rely on?
- ✓ How will I care for myself?
- ✓ Where can I find emotional support?
- ✓ Where can I get support with the physical caregiving tasks?
- ✓ What tasks am I unable or unwilling to do?
- ✓ What am I most afraid of and how can my parent's doctor help me address that?
- ✓ How will I arrange for respite care if I need it?

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