

Hope & Healing

Hospital Stays Having a Safe Hospital Stay

A heart at peace gives life to the body — Proverbs 14:30

Introduction _____

Going to the hospital is about like visiting a foreign country. The sights are unfamiliar, the language sounds strange, and the people are all new to you.

This handout will tell you what to bring and what not to bring, and give you tips about safety and tell you how to plan your return home.

This information is meant for people who plan to enter the hospital by choice rather than for those who go to the hospital because of an emergency. But, relatives and friends of patients who enter the hospital because of an emergency may find them useful as well.

What to Bring _____

It's best to pack light. But, be sure you bring the following:

- A few nightclothes, a bathrobe, and sturdy slippers. Label all personal items with your name.
- Comfortable clothes to wear home.
- A toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo, comb and brush, deodorant, and razor.
- A list of all the medicines you take, including prescription and non-prescription drugs.
- Details of past illnesses and surgery that you have had, and a list of allergies.
- A living will.
- Your health insurance card.

- A list of names and telephone numbers of family members to contact in case of an emergency.
- Ten dollars or less for newspapers, magazine or any other items you may wish to buy in the hospital gift shop.

What Not to Bring _____

Leave cash, jewelry (including wedding rings, earrings, and watches), credit cards, and checkbooks at home or have a family member or friend keep them. If you must bring valuables, ask if they can be kept in the hospital safe during your stay. In addition, leave electric razors, hair dryers, and curling irons at home since they may not be grounded properly and could be unsafe.

Admission _____

The admitting office is the first step. Here the patient or a family member signs forms allowing the hospital staff to provide treatment and to release medical information to the insurance company.

Those who don't have private health insurance can talk with a financial counselor who will advise about other sources of money to pay the bill, such as Medicare or Medicaid or Vocational Rehabilitation.

The Hospital Staff _____

After getting settled into your room, you will begin to meet members of your health care team.

- **Doctors.** Each patient has an attending physician who has overall

charge of care while that person is in the hospital. The attending physician may be the patient's regular doctor, a member of the hospital staff to whom the patient has been referred, or a specialist in any of a number of fields.

In a teaching hospital, where doctors train, a number of physicians care for each patient. The attending physician provides overall direction, but most of the hour by hour and day by day care comes from the house staff. These are resident doctors who have graduated from medical school within the past one to four years. And, you may also see medical students and fellows (doctors training in a special area who have already completed their resident physician training).

Together, these doctors "round," or see patients once or twice a day to go over test results, order new tests and to check on their patient's condition. In a non-teaching hospital, patients are treated by attending physicians only.

- **Nurses.** The head nurse coordinates the nursing care of each patient in a particular unit. Registered nurses, nurse practitioners, licensed practical nurses, nurse's aides, and nursing students give medicines, check blood pressures, temperatures, weights, and pulses, and provide treatments and teaching to patients under the supervision of the head nurse.

- **Physical Therapists.** The physical therapists teach patients to build muscles

and improve coordination through the use of heat, cold, exercise, and water therapy.

• **Occupational Therapy.**

Occupational therapists restore or maintain the ability of patients to perform the tasks of daily living such as eating, bathing, and dressing.

• **Respiratory Therapists.** They teach patients exercises to prevent lung infections after surgery. They also operate and monitor the machines that breathe for people who can't breathe on their own.

• **Dieticians.** Dieticians teach patients how to plan a well balanced meal.

• **Pharmacists.** They advise physicians about the chemical makeup and correct use of drugs and prepare the medicines used in the hospital.

• **Social Workers.** They offer support and advice to patients and their families.

Safety Tips _____

Because medical equipment is not familiar and medications can make you feel tired or weak, it's good to take a few extra safety steps while in the hospital:

- Use the call bell if you need help.
- Use the controls to lower the bed before getting in or out.
- Be careful not to trip over the many wires and tubes that may be around the bed.
- Try to keep things you need within easy reach.
- Take only prescribed medicine.
- Be careful getting in and out of the bathtub or shower. Hold on to grab bars for support.
- Don't smoke in the hospital.

Questions _____

During your hospital stay, you may want to ask your doctor or nurse some or all of the following questions:

- What will this test tell you? Why is it needed, and when will you know the results?
- What treatment is needed, and how long will it last?
- What are the benefits and risks of this treatment?
- When can I go home?
- When I go home, will I have to change my regular activities?
- How often will I need check-ups?
- Is any other follow-up care needed?

Discharge _____

Discharge planning before leaving the hospital can help you prepare for your health and home-care needs after you go home. This service is often provided by a registered nurse, social worker, or the hospital's discharge planner. Discharge planning is offered in the hospital so that, if needed, a visiting nurse, hospital equipment, meals-on-wheels, or other services will be there when you get home.

Summary _____

Your choice of a hospital will depend on your illness. For a relatively routine problem the community hospital is usually a good choice. For a condition that is unusual or difficult to treat and needs the best care possible, the teaching hospital is often advisable. In this case extra travel time and expense may be required.

**Awaken the
Miracles
Within You**

**The Miracle
of Service**

Jesus demonstrated that we are in the world for two purposes: to learn and to serve.

While we are learning, we can't expect to do everything perfect. Each step we take, however, puts us closer to being a master rather than a student. When we are ready the opportunities will come.

And, they come without rehearsals. Each day is an adventure and the more we can do for others, the more satisfying life is, both for us and for the one whose burden we have lifted.

Everyone you meet can be served in some way: a kind word, a smile, something to eat, a cup of water, a helping hand, and so on.

Each year the quality of our workmanship should grow and so should the tenderness of our hearts.

The recommendations and information in this handout are appropriate in most cases. However, for specific information concerning your personal medical condition, please, consult your doctor.