
Health assessments in hospital

Summary

- Regular assessments (health checks) are performed by hospital staff during your hospital stay.
 - For some assessments you need to answer questions, others require you to do tasks.
 - The staff may also gather information from your family and carers and your GP during the assessment process.
 - Assessments are often repeated, throughout your stay, to help staff measure your progress.
 - Be open and honest when answering assessment questions.
 - Assessments help identify your care needs so you can work with hospital staff to get better.
 - The assessment process is particularly valuable for older people, who may decline more rapidly when they are admitted to hospital.
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Regular assessments are performed by hospital staff during your hospital stay. These assessments are undertaken to explore your medical, physical, psychological and social needs. Assessments help to find the cause of your illness and check your ability to do day-to-day tasks. Assessments help to keep you safe by identifying areas of risk or deterioration in your health. They are particularly valuable for older people, who may decline more rapidly when they are admitted to hospital.

In hospital, assessments may include a list of questions or tasks that staff members will ask you to complete. These are used to work out whether there is a problem and to measure your progress once you have started treatment.

Definition of a health assessment in hospital

Assessment is a broad term that is used to describe a process of measuring your health and ability to perform everyday skills during a hospital stay.

Assessments can involve a set list of questions or tasks that staff members will ask you to perform. These are used to help work out whether or not there is a problem. Assessments are often repeated in order to help measure your progress and identify your ongoing needs. This helps make sure you get the best care in hospital and helps with planning for when you leave hospital.

For some assessments you need to answer questions, for others you need to perform certain tasks. Staff may also want to talk to your family, carers and your GP to understand more about your needs.

Purpose of health assessments in hospital

Regular assessments of patients by hospital staff help to identify problems quickly. If health issues are not picked up early, they can get worse. This can mean a longer hospital stay or more severe health problems later.

It is important for you and your family to participate in the assessment process and to tell staff if you have concerns.

Your healthcare team in hospital are always checking your health and ability to do everyday skills. Part of their role is to identify and diagnose problems that will impact on your quality of life. Your healthcare workers look at your medical issues and they also investigate your social, physical, and psychological health.

Ongoing assessment by hospital staff means they can also recommend the best care plan for you when you are discharged from hospital, and put you in contact with services that can support you outside of hospital.

Tips for participating in a health assessment in hospital

When answering assessment questions, remember your privacy will be respected. Hospitals and hospital staff are not allowed to share information about you and your health without your consent (except when medically or legally necessary).

Examples of the types of questions that a person may be asked during a hospital health assessment include:

- Before the illness or injury that brought you to hospital, did you need someone to help you on a regular basis?
- In general, do you see well?
- Do you take more than three different medications every day?

Examples of tasks that a person may be asked to perform if they are able include:

- standing or walking with or without assistance
- drawing a clock
- other memory and thinking tests.

It is important to:

- Be open and honest when answering assessment questions.
- Tell staff what matters to you and if you have any concerns.
- Perform assessment tasks to the best of your ability.

Tell hospital staff straightaway if you:

- feel very unwell
- don't understand why you are being asked questions or are performing tasks
- are in pain during an assessment.

You may be asked the same types of questions many times during your stay, such as when your health changes or you are moved to a different ward. Answer each time to the best of your ability.

You may need ongoing assessments for other problems while in hospital. Some assessments are done routinely and some are performed as a precaution.

During your hospital stay it's important that you and your family and carers tell hospital staff if you have any concerns about your health or about your ability to do activities.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Nursing staff
- Allied health staff

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