
Hospital admission – what to expect

Summary

- Follow the instructions in your letter, email or text message of admission from the hospital. You may need to not eat or drink anything for many hours before going into hospital.
 - When you get to hospital, a nurse will talk to you about your medical condition and your current health status and may do some health checks to make sure you are ready for your procedure or surgery.
 - Let hospital staff know if you have any special needs such as disability access, dietary requirements or interpreters who speak your preferred language.
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Going to hospital for surgery or treatment can be stressful, but knowing what happens when you arrive and understanding your hospital's admission procedure can help you settle in.

Before you arrive at hospital

The letter, email or text message of admission (also called an 'admission notice') that your hospital sends to confirm the date and time of your hospital stay will also outline any special instructions you need to follow before arriving at hospital. For example, you may not be allowed to eat or drink anything for many hours before your treatment.

For planned hospital admissions, you may have to attend a pre-admission assessment to make sure you are ready for treatment. This may be done over the phone or you may need to come in for an appointment at the hospital.

You may also be asked to fill in an admission form with your personal and funding details, such as your Medicare card number and private health insurance details (if you have cover), and send this to the hospital several days before your admission.

Types of hospital admission

Depending on the purpose of your hospital stay, there are different types of hospital admissions, including:

- emergency (unplanned)
- overnight or extended (planned)
- maternity (planned)
- day procedure.

Emergency admission

Telephone triple zero (**000**) for medical emergencies. Even if you are not sure it is an emergency, still phone 000 as they will tell you what to do. In a medical emergency, you will be transported to hospital by ambulance. If the situation is urgent but not immediately life-threatening, you can be driven to the emergency department by private car. Emergency staff will let you know if you need to be admitted to hospital for further treatment.

As this kind of admission is unplanned, it may take some time for a hospital bed to be ready. Sometimes, the emergency staff may need to transfer you to another hospital for your treatment. Until then, you will be cared for in the emergency department.

Overnight or extended admission

For an overnight stay, or extended admission, your admission letter, email or text message should let you know where you need to go on the day of your admission to hospital. Bring this letter -and your pre-admission health questionnaire (if you have been asked to complete one) and go to the place stated in your admission letter, email

or text message. You may receive a call from the hospital on the day before your admission to confirm your hospital stay.

When you get to the hospital, check in at the reception desk and show them your admission notification and **Medicare** card. There may be more paperwork to complete and you may have to pay up front for any out-of-pocket expenses (if you are a private patient). You will be shown to your hospital room or a waiting area by a nurse, who will then conduct an admission interview.

Maternity department admission

For a maternity admission, your maternity department will send or give you a patient information pack detailing what to do when your labour begins. This usually involves contacting the maternity department to let them know that your labour has started.

When you arrive at the hospital, make your way to the reception desk (if it is a maternity hospital) or go directly to the maternity department (if it is a general hospital) and let them know you have arrived. A midwife will assess you and if your labour has progressed enough or if complications have arisen, you will be admitted and taken to a birthing suite.

Day procedure admission

For a day procedure admission, bring your admission notification and your pre-admission health questionnaire (if you have been asked to complete one) and go to the place stated in your admission letter, email or text message.

On arrival, check in at the reception desk, where you may need to fill in more paperwork and pay for your out-of-pocket expenses (if you are a private patient). You will then be shown to the pre-operative area by a member of the nursing team, where they will conduct an admission interview.

Admission interview

During your admission interview, you will talk with a nurse about your medical condition and your current health status. The nurse may conduct some basic tests, such as taking your temperature and blood pressure, and will ask questions about your health to make sure you are ready for surgery or treatment.

If you are having surgery, an anaesthetist, who is the doctor responsible for anaesthetising you for the duration of your surgery or procedure, may also ask you questions. Your surgeon may visit you too.

Asking for an interpreter

For people who prefer to use a language other than English and for people who have vision, hearing or speech impairments, being unable to communicate effectively in hospital can be a serious situation.

All Victorian public hospitals provide free access to interpreting services (this includes Auslan for people with a hearing impairment). Professional, accredited interpreters are impartial and deliver a confidential service. Interpreters are usually available to come to the hospital or to interpret via telephone. You can request an interpreter to be with you during your admission interview and at any stage of your hospital stay.

You can also ask if the hospital can provide translated information in a written format.

Disability assistance and other special needs

If you have vision impairment, ask if the hospital provides information, pre-admission questionnaires and other forms in electronic, large print or Braille format. You can also ask if they can provide extra, adjustable lighting in your room.

A hospital staff member will help you get used to your room so that you know where your personal belongings are and where the bathroom is, as well as any obstacles.

If you have a hearing impairment, you can request an Auslan interpreter for all communication with hospital staff, including during an admission interview and at any stage of your hospital stay. You can also ask your hospital for a communication kit for people with a hearing impairment.

If you are in a wheelchair or have trouble moving, the hospital will have wheelchair ramps, accessible parking spaces and wheelchair-accessible lifts, toilets and rooms. Ask your hospital if they have an accessible writing desk where you can fill in forms during the admissions process.

Where to get help

- Your GP (doctor)
- Hospital administration staff
- Ward clerk (hospital receptionist)

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