Hospital discharge information for family and carers

Summary

- Your support and care can have a significant effect on a person's recovery
- Stay informed about their health condition/s, medications and healthcare team
- Encourage others to help you support the person to ensure they stay positive and focussed on recovery
- Seek help from others and services that can provide practical and emotional support
- Look after yourself so that you can help the person in the best state possible
- Communicate with the person and stay positive, engage them in meaningful activities

Family, friends and carers can provide both practical and emotional support to a person who has experienced a major trauma and is about to leave hospital.

Watching a loved one go through a hospital emergency department can be difficult. But it is important that you provide support and care and stay informed about the person's healthcare, so you can help them as best you can.

When a person is well enough to move from hospital to home or to a rehabilitation service or a care facility, the hospital staff will set in motion the process of departure known as discharge.

The discharge process – leaving hospital

Discharge is when the hospital healthcare team:

- evaluates the person's health and discusses it with them and their family or carer
- talks with the person and their family or carer about the anticipated next stages of care after a hospital stay
- discusses medications with the person and their family or carer
- develops a plan for the person to move to a rehabilitation service, a care facility or back home for recovery
- advises if the person will need other supports such as aids and equipment or support services
- arranges for follow up appointments or tests
- provides a letter of discharge to the person's GP.

Other details discussed during the discharge process will include:

- the range of physical limitations the person may have both in the short and long term
- the types of support you can provide for the person, if they live alone
- family or community assistance with personal care and household care – for example, services that provide meal delivery, home cleaning, transportation, personal washing and dressing
- the person's diet.

The fact sheet major trauma discharge from hospital lists questions that can be asked about the person's discharge.

The next phase in the person's care may involve going to a rehabilitation service for a few weeks or months. This will mean that the person is in the care of others for a period of time. Depending on your situation you may have little or a lot of time to support them, and you may or may not be close to where they are staying. Identifying supports that can help you and the person is essential for their recovery.

Your support is an important factor in the recovery of your loved one. At a time when they may still be suffering with the after effects of their injuries, and may be facing an ongoing recovery or a permanent disability, it’s important that they know of your support and care.

Helping a person with tasks when they leave hospital

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If the person you care for is unable to do all of the tasks required of them at discharge, there are some that you may need to do on their behalf.

Before leaving hospital, make sure all forms and documents are completed or attended to. Pick up any prescription medication, and arrange payment for any services or products that are not covered by Medicare or the person's private health insurance.

If the person is covered by a Transport Accident Commission (TAC), WorkSafe Victoria or Department of Veterans’ Affairs claim, or they have private health insurance, they may provide some or all cover for a range of medical costs. This will vary depending on the person's situation. Discuss with the appropriate organisation or insurer the kinds of costs they will and won't pay for.

The things that may require payment include:

- pharmacy items not opened when the person leaves hospital
- aids supplied for use at home (such as a raised toilet seat or a splint)
- pay TV, internet access, movies and non-local phone calls
- patient-requested non-emergency ambulance transportation.

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:

Better Health Channel