

Discharge Instructions

Martha Moore is walking pain-free thanks to a new hip.

“My mobility is much better. It's what it should be. I don't think about it any more when before it was all I thought about, before the surgery. So when you have your quality of life back it makes a world of difference.”

After surgery, Martha was very careful to follow the instructions that she was given before she went home from the hospital...

“It's that complete understanding of OK, this is what's going to happen going forward. And I think I'm a better patient and can be a better patient if I understand the instructions and can follow them. My recovery will be faster. And that's what you want at the end of the day - more complete recovery.”

Discharge instructions include critical information about your follow-up care. So, anxious as you might be to get out of the hospital, it's really important to pay attention to all the information that's given to you, so you don't end up being re-admitted.

“Patients often will say the best thing is getting out of the hospital. And I agree. That's our goal for everyone. But going out and then having something go wrong that brings you back? Why did you come in the first place? Nobody wants that.”

Before you leave the hospital, you will receive specific guidelines to help you heal. These discharge instructions will be designed by the hospital just for you and your treatment plan.

“The exercises I should do or not do. Restrictions on my mobility or diet or anything else. Understanding my medications. So I left knowing, you know, the security of the hospital and going home, I didn't want to be calling, you know, the doctor every five minutes.”

Some of the things your discharge instructions might include:

- Your treatments or procedures
- including what to expect as you recover
- New medications or directions for taking prescriptions that you used before the hospital
- Advice for caring for any incisions or wounds
- Instructions for any medical devices you may need after you leave the hospital
- Diet or exercise restrictions
- Instructions for going back to work, and
- Your doctor's contact information including the dates for any follow-up appointments^{2 31}

“The single most important thing perhaps for people to leave the hospital is to know how to get help. Knowing who you can call and when they're available brings you peace of mind knowing if something comes up you can get the help you need before it becomes a crisis and you're back in the hospital.”

“Whenever I do surgery, the patient is given two numbers when they leave, the number of the nursing station at the hospital that they had the surgery performed at, and our office number. And there is somebody available 24/7 at both of those numbers.”

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“The information the hospital gave me was easy to understand. The physician, the social worker, the nurse went over it with me. So I left knowing I was probably in a good spot and could handle everything when I got home.”

As a patient, you play an important part in the discharge plan, too. Speak up about what’s important to you...things that your healthcare team might not even know about that could affect your care...

“Are you going to go home by yourself? Are you leaving in a couple of days for a vacation? And is it OK for you to get on an airplane?”

“Are you going to have trouble getting to a grocery store? Are you going to have trouble if they changed your medication or are you going to have trouble affording it? Do you know what your insurance is going to cover?

These are questions that if you talk to your doctors and nurses and other people on the care team they’ll be able to help you.”

It’s also helpful to have a family member or friend with you when you receive your discharge instructions...it’s a lot of information to take in.

“Asking questions before you leave the hospital, making sure you understand what’s the plan. Very very important.”

Martha Moore couldn’t agree more...knowing what to expect helped insure she did NOT end up back at the hospital...

“I think the instructions I received put me on the right path to have a full and good recovery.”