

Preparing for Discharge

- Be sure the patient has a clear, readable copy of the **discharge instructions** and the **discharge medications**.
- Be sure the discharge documents contain a **phone number to call** if there are questions or concerns. Is the primary care physician “in charge” or is a specialist also managing the patient’s care?
- When is the patient to return to their physician for **follow-up**? Which doctor are they supposed to see?
- Is the patient being discharged home or to a skilled nursing facility? If discharged to a facility, how long are they authorized to stay?
- Will a **visiting nurse** be needed? Have the orders been written and authorization obtained?
- Will the patient need **help at home** or are they able to care for themselves? Is there family or friends available to help the patient at home? Have they been contacted?
- Have any **new medications** been added to the treatment plan? Have they been checked for drug interactions? Are the new discharge medications being provided by the hospital or will someone need to bring the prescription to a pharmacy?
- Are specific instructions included for the new medications including the dosage and number of times per day the medication is to be taken?
- How is the patient to care for any **wound or surgical site**? Do bandages or dressings need to be changed? If so, the patient or advocate needs to know how to change the dressing. When can bandages be removed? When can the patient shower or bathe?
- Does the patient need any physical and/or occupational **therapy**? When should therapy start and who will schedule it?
- Will the patient need any **medical equipment** at home? For example, oxygen, wheelchair, hospital bed, commode, walker? Has the order been placed? When should it arrive? Is it covered by insurance?
- Does the patient need the hospital or doctor to submit any **documentation** for disability benefits or worker’s compensation coverage? Who can the patient contact if more information is requested?