

Preparing for a Hospital Stay

Hospitalization Can Happen

Hospitalization of a person living with dementia is a potentially stressful experience often associated with negative outcomes for both the person and their family. There are many things family members can do to be prepared for hospitalization and to help it go as smoothly as possible.

The "Partner With Me" (PWM) project was developed to foster the understanding of strategies that may improve the hospital experience for patients, their family, and hospital staff. This project includes the development of a DVD and education packet for family caregivers of cognitively impaired patients. The 30-minute DVD is titled, "Partnering With Family Caregivers," and it emphasizes the need to communicate patient-specific needs and routines to hospital staff at admission. The information and resources included in both the education packet and DVD provide family members with valuable resources and tips to improve their loved ones' care during and after hospitalization.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONK9oDVOUaw&hd=1>

Hospital Staff

Many people may be involved in a person's care during their hospital stay.

Doctors are in charge of your care and will order treatments, procedures, and medications. The doctor in charge may be your primary doctor (the doctor you see outside the hospital), a specialist, or a hospitalist who is trained to oversee hospital care.

Nurses have a variety of roles in the care of patients in the hospital. Nurses' aides help with personal care (bathing), while registered nurses will give medicines, provide treatments such as wound care, offer teaching and education, and supervise the nurses' aides. Many hospitals have advanced practice nurses (nurse practitioners or clinical nurse specialists) who provide specialized care and education.



Nutritionists and dieticians can plan menus for the hospital stay and can teach you how to have well-balanced meals at home.

Occupational therapists work on your ability to perform everyday tasks like cooking, eating, bathing, or dressing. They can also evaluate safety in the home (for example, how to prevent falls).

Physical therapists show you how to exercise and strengthen muscles, and how to prevent complications caused by immobility. They help to determine the need for assistive devices (for example, walkers) and provide training on how to use these devices.

Pharmacists may be consulted about the medicines you take. They can give advice on how to pay for medicines, special packaging and delivery options for the home, and side effects to watch for with each medicine.

Respiratory therapists prevent and treat breathing problems. They teach exercises that help to avoid lung infections (for example, pneumonia).

Social workers can help find in-home care, rehabilitation, social services, long-term care, and support groups. They often work closely with families and may provide supportive counseling. They can provide information about legal and financial decision-making, and are often very involved with the discharge plan (what happens after hospitalization).

Technicians can take blood or perform diagnostic tests such as x-rays.