

Supporting Going to the Hospital

Support Person Fact Sheet

Key Facts

A stay in the hospital can be stressful and confusing for anyone, including people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Planning the visit carefully with the hospital can help the person's stay go as smoothly as possible.

People with I/DD should receive the same quality of care in a hospital as anyone else. The person also has the right to have a support person with them. Family members, advocates, or support workers may need to speak up to make sure this happens.



Supporting the Person

Before the hospital stay, it may help the person to look at pictures of hospitals and health professionals or even visit the hospital. If the person will need things like crutches or a cast, try to explain or show examples in advance. It may help to take some personal items along for their stay, such as photographs and games. Also, try to organize visits from friends,

Preparation and Planning

Most hospitals do pre-operation planning. You can encourage the person to raise issues that need to be worked out to make the hospital visit go smoothly. It is important for the person with I/DD to be involved in the process.

Support the person to be able to provide the hospital with these documents:

- A personal profile including information about how the person communicates
- Up-to-date health information
- Details of who can consent to any treatment the person does not understand.
- Information about the person's personal care needs, including feeding and bathing. The person has the right to have a family member or support person with them for these reasons.



The pre-admission plan should also include:

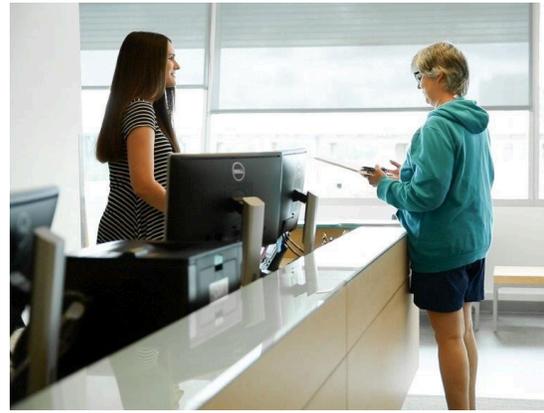
- How to make the hospital stay as stress free as possible. If the person is likely to need behavioral support, a mental health professional may need to be involved.
- What arrangements need to be planned for discharge from the hospital?

Emergency Admissions

Although you cannot plan in advance for emergency admissions, it is helpful to have a brief document on hand listing the person's medications, allergies, communication needs, swallowing and nutrition needs etc. This information can be included in a personal profile. Also, take the person's current medications to the hospital in their original containers.

Hospital Environment

Hospitals are busy places 24 hours a day. Bright lights, buzzers, and regular observation can be disturbing and can cause challenging behaviors. Reassure the person you are supporting to advocate for their needs and work with staff to minimize the negative impact of the hospital



Discharge and Follow-Up

Careful discharge planning and follow up will reduce the risk of problems with the person's recovery. Support the person by making sure they get clear information about:

- Any wound care or new medication
- Any extra support the person may need when they leave the hospital
- What follow up treatment is needed
- Work with the person and hospital staff to see how these needs will be met. If the person lives in supported accommodations, the manager or case manager needs to be involved in the process.

For more information:

[Click here to learn about getting the best possible health care \(URL: https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/healthyliving.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/healthyliving.html)

[Click here to learn about questions to ask your doctor \(URL: https://www.ahrq.gov/patients-consumers/patient-involvement/ask-your-doctor/index.html\)](https://www.ahrq.gov/patients-consumers/patient-involvement/ask-your-doctor/index.html)

[Click here to learn more about Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund \(URL: https://dredf.org/public-policy/health-access-to-care-old/disability-healthcare-access-brief\)](https://dredf.org/public-policy/health-access-to-care-old/disability-healthcare-access-brief)

Related fact sheets:

Support Person Fact Sheet: Helping with Communication with the Doctor

This fact sheet was created in June 2021.

The fact sheet contains general information only and does not take into account individual circumstances. It should not be relied on for medical advice. We encourage you to review the information in this fact sheet within the context of educational purposes and when appropriate, share it with your health professional to decide whether the information is right for you.

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