

# Hospital Tips and Advice

## What to Bring:

- Your insurance card
- List of current medications [also see box below]
- List of doctors that you are seeing
- List of past medical history and prior surgeries
- List of family members, power-of-attorney *with phone numbers*
- Comfortable night clothes, slippers
- Clothes to go home
- Minimum amount of cash for incidentals

## What to Leave:

- Cash
- Credit cards, checkbooks
- Jewelry, personal items
- Razors, hair dryers, etc.

## Be Prepared

While no one wants to think about being in the hospital, it does happen. If a patient takes some simple steps to prepare before the need, the experience can be easier, healthier and safer for the patient.

Having essential papers and information available is a good idea in order to make the experience in the hospital more efficient and less stressful. Keep copies of these papers (insurance cards, medication list, medical history, family, doctors, living will) in a folder or envelope at home so that it can be easily brought with you. It is also a good idea to give a copy of these papers to a family member or friend, who can bring them if you do not have them on admission.

The staffing issues with local hospitals (and hospitals throughout the country) is not a secret. Nurses are responsible for more and more patients. Pharmacies change your medications to save money (see article below). Many healthcare professionals will be coming in and out with information. All of these factors make it very stressful and



Hospitals can be very intimidating and foreign places for the sick patient

confusing in the hospital. It is also no secret that many errors occur in caring for patients every day. Most are incidental and not harmful.

The doctors recommend that a family member stay with you as much as possible in the hospital to help understand information and to “double check” medications and other treatments.

## Bring Your Medications — You May Need Them

In order to cut costs most local hospitals have a restricted list of medications (formulary) that they will give you in the hospital. Many times they have a medication very similar to your regular medication, which can easily be given without any problem. Sometimes they do not have your medication or a reasonable alternative medication.

In this case it may be best for your doctor to allow you to take your regular medications from home.

The medications carried by the hospital can change at any time. It is best to be prepared and be ready to take your own medications if needed.

## Personal Best Health

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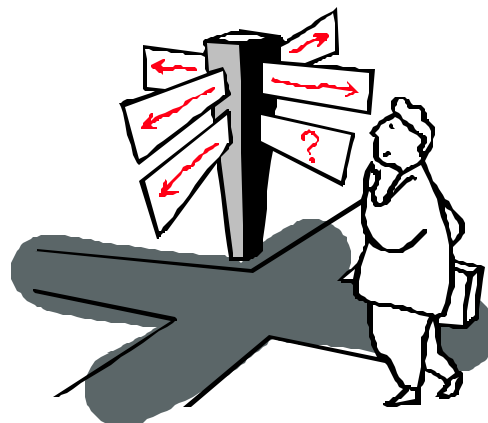
Internal Medicine: Doctors for Adults

PERSONALBESTHEALTH.COM

## Questions and Your Rights

A lot of unfamiliar things go on in the hospital. You are also not well and may not be able to understand complicated explanations as easily as when you are healthy. When questions come up write them down so that you can ask your doctors or nurses when they come in to your room. If you don't understand — don't stop asking questions until you do. Here are some common questions that you may want or need to ask while in the hospital:

- What will the test tell you? Why do you need the test?
- What treatments will I need?
- What are the benefits of treatment? What are the risks of treatment?
- When can I go home?
- What will I have to change (diet, activity, medications, etc.) when I go home?
- Do I need to follow-up? When?



Ask questions if you do not understand what is going on.

## Hospital Safety Tips

Because you may feel weak or tired, please take a few extra safety steps while in the hospital:

- Use the call bell or button when you need help.
- Use the controls to lower your bed before getting in or out.
- Be careful not to trip over the wires and tubes that may be around the bed.
- Try to keep the things you need within easy reach. If a staff member moves them in providing care, ask them to return them within reach when they are done.
- Take only prescribed medicines. If you bring your own medicines with you, tell your nurse or doctor. *Don't take other drugs without your doctor's permission.*
- Hold on to grab bars for support when getting in and out of the bathtub or shower.
- Use handrails on stairways and in hallways.
- Have a family member or friend with you as much as possible to “double check” things that are being done and to make sure that treatment or tests that should be done are being done.

In addition to having your questions answered, there are several other concepts regarding rights that you should be aware of.

**Patient Rights:** While in the hospital it will seem as though many persons are doing things to you. You have the right to ask questions and to refuse treatment or tests if you want.

**Durable Power of Attorney for Health:** this person is designated to make decisions about your health if you are unable to do so on your own. The patient designates this person ahead of time and needs to execute legal documents.

**Living Will:** this document lets a patient communicate how they want to be cared for at the end of life. Specifically, life support, feeding tubes and other treatments are covered by these documents. You can stipulate if do or do not want any or all treatments.