

TIPS AND RESOURCES FOR CAREGIVERS

Planning a Transition From Hospital To Home

To the fullest extent possible, the person you help should make their own decisions about transitioning from a hospital to their home. If you are authorized to make decisions on their behalf, you have a special responsibility to ask questions about what to expect, and the type and amount of help needed to avoid a readmission to the hospital.

7 TIPS FOR A SAFE RETURN HOME

- **Make a plan.** Prepare for discharge days or weeks in advance, even upon admission if possible. Visit *Ask Medicare* at www.medicare.gov/caregivers, and go to “Caregiver Topics,” and “Support for Caregivers” to access the “Managing a Hospital-to-Home Transition” video, which includes a checklist of tips for making the process easier. You can also download a discharge planning checklist.
- **Ask questions and take notes.** Be sure you know why old medicines have been stopped, what new medicines are for, and if you need to watch for any reactions or side effects. Keep track of who you talk to.
- **Prepare to meet new needs.** Work with the hospital discharge team to get comfortable with any new help the patient will need (i.e., taking medicines, using medical equipment, changing bandages, or giving shots).
- **Get the patient’s home ready.** Plan ahead for additions or adaptations that will be needed, such as a hospital bed, a walker or wheelchair, a ramp in place of the stairs, or a shower stool in the bathroom. Remove items that may cause falls, such as area rugs and cords, and reduce excess clutter to allow for easy passage from room to room.
- **Plan for additional expenses.** Visit the *Ask Medicare* Web site at www.medicare.gov/caregivers and click on “Caregiver Topics,” “Paying for Care,” and “Which expenses are covered” for a helpful planning tool.
- **Make a list of key contacts.** These include doctors, pharmacists, representatives from a home care agency, and others who may need to be consulted. Get business cards, if possible.
- **Get additional help if necessary.** Go to www.medicare.gov/HHCompare/Home.asp to learn about home health services.

ADDITIONAL CAREGIVER RESOURCES

- The United Hospital Fund’s Next Step in Care campaign offers information on key health care transitions at www.nextstepincare.org.
- AARP offers a “Planning Guide for Families.” Go to www.aarp.org and click on the “AARP Foundation” link and then “Prepare to Care.”

Ask Medicare (www.medicare.gov/caregivers) also offers information on enrolling in Medicare, choosing a prescription drug plan, finding state and local resources to support caregiving tasks, accessing in-home services, and a free e-newsletter with the latest Medicare updates.