Hospital Stay Checklist for Families

From Liesa Harte, M.D. | Healthy Aging · YouTube: @liesahartemd · Nov 2, 2026

About 1 in 3 people over 70 leave the hospital with a new disability — often from bed rest and confusion rather than the illness itself. Families can prevent much of it. **Bring this page to the hospital.**

1 Bring from home

- [ ] Glasses
- [ ] Hearing aids, plus spare batteries or the charger
- [ ] Dentures
- [ ] Walker or cane they use at home
- [ ] Non-slip shoes or slippers
- [ ] A clock and a calendar, or a family photo
- [ ] A list of all medicines, vitamins and supplements

2 Ask every day

- [ ] “Can she get up and walk today?” If not, “Why not?”
- [ ] “Can she sit in a chair for meals?”
- [ ] “Is anything new that could cause confusion or sleepiness, like sleeping pills or strong pain medicine?”
- [ ] “Does he still need the urinary catheter?”
- [ ] Is the water cup within reach? Can they open their food containers?

Keep the brain oriented: open the curtains by day, talk about the date and news from home, and visit in the late afternoon or evening when you can, when confusion tends to get worse.

3 Before discharge

ASK:

- [ ] “Does she qualify for physical therapy at home?”
- [ ] Get the new medication list, and ask what was started, stopped or changed
- [ ] Book a follow-up with their regular doctor within 1–2 weeks

First Two Weeks at Home

Hospital Stay Checklist for Families — continued

4 Set up for a safe return

ASK BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE HOSPITAL:

- [ ] “What warning signs should make us call you?”

AT HOME:

- [ ] Clear the path to the bathroom; add a night light
- [ ] Put everyday items at waist height
- [ ] A little walking every day — several short trips around the house
- [ ] Bring the new medication list to the follow-up

5 Call their doctor if, after coming home

- [ ] New or worsening confusion
- [ ] Not eating or drinking
- [ ] A fall, or a near-fall
- [ ] Getting weaker instead of stronger after the first week

Call emergency services right away for:

Face drooping, arm or leg weakness, slurred speech, trouble breathing, chest pain, or if they’re very hard to wake.

This checklist is for education only and is not a substitute for personal medical advice. Always follow the guidance of the medical team caring for your loved one.

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