

What to do when a parent is hospitalized

A hospital call can knock the wind out of you. Here's a calm, step-by-step checklist so you can focus on your parent while making sure nothing important is missed.

ⓘ This is general organizational guidance, not medical advice. In an emergency, call your local emergency number. Always follow the care team's instructions.

In the first hours

- ☐ Write down **where they are** — hospital, unit, room, and the main phone number.
- ☐ Get the names of the **attending physician** and the **nurse or case manager** on the unit.
- ☐ Note the **admitting reason** in plain words, so you can repeat it to family and other doctors.
- ☐ Ask the team to note **who may receive updates** — a HIPAA authorization lets them speak with you.
- ☐ Tell **siblings and close family** at once, and agree on one person as the main point of contact.

During the stay

- ☐ Bring or share a current **medication list** and any **allergies**.
- ☐ Have their **insurance cards**, **photo ID**, and preferred pharmacy handy.
- ☐ If they exist, provide the **advance directive** and **healthcare power of attorney** so the team knows their wishes.
- ☐ Keep a simple log: date, who you spoke with, and what they said.

- ☐ Ask daily about the **care plan**: what's being treated, what to expect, and roughly how long.
- ☐ Ask the **case manager** early what discharge will likely involve.

Before discharge

- ☐ Request the **discharge summary** and a reviewed, reconciled **medication list**.
- ☐ Confirm **follow-up appointments** — with whom, when, and where.
- ☐ Ask what **equipment or home help** is needed (walker, oxygen, home health, physical therapy).
- ☐ Get clear **warning signs** to watch for and a number to call with questions.
- ☐ Check whether home is **safe to return to**, or whether rehab or extra help is needed first.

Once they're home

- ☐ **Fill new prescriptions** and set up reminders for the new schedule.
- ☐ Put **follow-up appointments** on a shared calendar the whole family can see.
- ☐ Save the **discharge summary and med list** where everyone helping can find them.
- ☐ Watch for warning signs and don't hesitate to **call the follow-up number**.
- ☐ Check in on the **main caregiver** — the person who was at the hospital needs support too.