

Hospital Stay

- Help keep your loved one calm by having someone stay with him/her at all times. This will make the stay and tests or procedures easier for him/her.
- Answer the doctor's questions outside your loved one's room. Ask the doctor to limit his questions to the patient if he/she is struggling to answer.
- Ask staff to avoid physical restraints.
- Open food containers and remove trays. Help your loved one order his/her meals.
- Offer and remind him/her to drink fluids. Take your loved one to the bathroom every two hours while awake.
- The strange surroundings and events will stress a person with memory issues and they will require more help with personal care. They may have delirium due to the illness, medications, etc. This is a temporary, sudden confusion that resolves when the source is addressed. The increased confusion and need for more assistance may last until well after discharge. The patient may require additional help when they go home to assure safety.
- Assume your loved one will have problems finding the bathroom, using the call light and sleeping soundly at night.
- Decide with the staff who will do what for your loved one. You may want to be the one to help with bathing, eating or using the toilet.
- Give the staff the form attached filled out with specific information about your loved one.

For more information on memory loss and dementia support for Piedmont Healthcare patients and their families, call Sixty Plus Older Adult Services at **404-605-3867**.

Sources: *Hospitalization Happens – A Guide to Hospital Visits for Your Loved Ones with Memory Disorders*; NC Division of Aging Wise Use of the Emergency Room Wellness Map; Mosby Great Performances

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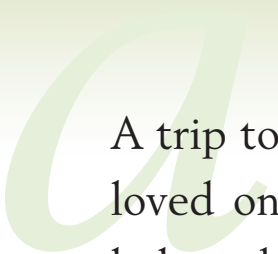
Hospital Visits for Loved Ones with Memory Issues

*Planning Ahead – Tips for Friends
and Family Members*



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A trip to the hospital is stressful for anyone, but more so if your loved one has difficulty with their memory. This brochure can help reduce your stress by helping you plan ahead, providing tips on how to support and comfort your loved one as well as how to work closely with the hospital staff.

Identifying People You Can Call On

Identify at least two dependable family members, neighbors or friends known to your loved one that you can call when a trip to the hospital is required. They can go with you or meet you there so that one person can take care of the paperwork and the other can stay with your loved one.

“Hospital Visit” Bag

Be prepared. It is likely a time will come when a trip to the hospital or emergency room will be necessary. By having these things ready to go, the stress and anxiety can be reduced.

- A list of health insurance companies with policy numbers and pre-authorization phone numbers, Medicare and Medicaid card numbers, all physicians and addresses/ phone numbers
- List of phone numbers of key family members, minister, helpful friends, etc.
- List of current medications, doses and physician who prescribed (keep updated)
- List of all allergies to medicines and food. Also list medicines that have caused problems.
- Copies of Durable Power of Attorney, Healthcare Power of Attorney and Living Will
- A change of clothes and a plastic bag for soiled clothing
- Extra adult briefs or Depends if used at home
- Moist hand wipes
- Paper and pen to write down information and directions. You may want to write down the symptoms to show to the doctors and nurses.
- A sealed snack such as crackers and a bottle of water or juice for you and the patient.
- Pain medication such as Advil or Tylenol for yourself.

- A reassuring object for your loved one such as a picture, stuffed animal or a blanket
- A small amount of cash
- A note on outside of bag to take cell phone and ALL current medications.
- A card to show the staff that says “My companion has memory issues. Let me help with specific questions.” Avoid talking about the memory changes or behaviors in front of the patient. It can be upsetting and embarrassing to him/her.

Emergency Department (ED) Visit

- Be able to report what was occurring just prior to the emergency event.
- Triage is where they identify and rank the seriousness of patients as they arrive. The ED is not first come, first served.
- Be prepared to wait, both in the waiting room and in exam room for tests to be run and for doctors to call back.
- EDs can be noisy and frightening. Your calm and confident presentation will help calm the patient; offer physical comfort and reassurance as well.
- Often emergency staff has little training in memory disorders and resulting behaviors. Help them understand your loved one.
- Many conditions are being treated and released that used to be admitted to the hospital. Do not be surprised if your loved one’s illness does not meet criteria for admission.
- Do not leave the ED without a follow-up plan. Ask for details and clarification. Most instructions include follow up with your loved one’s primary physician. Even if you feel the problem has been resolved, notify this doctor of the incident.

Planning a Hospital Admission

- Ask for a private room if possible. It will be more quiet and calm.
- Do not talk about the hospital stay in front of the person as if he/she is not there.
- As much as possible let your loved one take part in planning the stay.
- Plan ahead: Make a schedule of family and friends to take turns sitting with your loved one during the entire hospital stay.
- Just before going to the hospital, find a way to tell your loved one that the two of you are going to spend a short time in the hospital.
- Pack comfort items that will help your loved one feel safe and secure: favorite clothes, blanket, photos, etc.