

**NEED TO KNOW** FOR PATIENTS & FAMILIES

what  
patients  
and their  
families  
need to  
know  
before  
going  
into the  
hospital

## Safety: Falls

**Definition:** Falls can be caused by safety hazards in the environment, weakness, poor balance, illness, sudden changes in blood pressure, or certain medications.

**Why Is It Important?** A fall can result in a wide range of injuries and can interfere with discharge plans.

**What You Can Do:**

1. If you normally wear glasses and hearing aid(s), make sure you do so when in the hospital.
2. Tell your nurse when you begin to feel pain, weakness or dizziness.
3. Make sure that you can reach the call light to ask for help.
4. Ask the nurse or physical therapist about: exercises, getting out of bed for meals, and walking in the hall. Moving about will prevent the kind of weakness that can cause falls.
5. It is very important to be as active as possible BUT when you're not feeling well, have someone nearby when getting out of bed or walking.
6. Get out of bed slowly. Sit on the side of the bed for a few minutes before standing.
7. Get to know your way around your room. Don't walk through cluttered areas.
8. Use the grab bars while you are in the bathroom.
9. Wear non-skid slippers or shoes that give support.
10. If you use a cane, walker, crutches or a brace at home, ask a family member or friend to bring it to the hospital.
11. Use your call light to ask for help getting up and as soon as you feel the need to go to the bathroom.

**Going and Coming Home: The NICHE Need to Know Hospital Checklist**

(check each item off as you pack them)

**Things you should bring to the hospital or have available at all times**

- Your medication list
- The names and phone numbers of all of your doctors and what their specialties are
- Your medical history (surgeries, procedures, etc. and dates)
- Your family phone numbers — home and cell
- Allergies or adverse reactions to medication, food or your environment
- Your Power of Attorney and/or Living Will papers
- Your insurance cards or information
- Your pharmacy phone number

**If you are staying in the hospital, you may want to have your family bring in the following:**

- If you didn't already, your Power of Attorney and/or Living Will papers
- Insurance cards, Medicaid card and/or Medicare card
- Your glasses and/or hearing aids if you did not bring them
- Assistive devices such as a walker or cane
- Dentures if you didn't bring them
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Comb or brush
- Notebook and pen
- Other items you feel would make you more comfortable (robe, slippers, etc.)
- Soothing entertainment items such as music, radio, books, magazines or puzzle books
- Favorite blanket

When bringing personal items like a blanket, music, etc. be sure to clearly label belongings with your name and phone number.

For family/caregivers: If your loved one is cognitively impaired, provide personal information (hobbies, interests, occupation, etc.) about the patient that can help the staff "connect." See NICHE Need to Know Dementia Series.

**When you are going home from the hospital, make sure you know:**

- Written directions on what you should do when you get home
- How to do any medical tasks you will need (such as changing bandages)
- Any changes that may be needed in the environment at home (e.g., bathroom safety)
- The timeline of your recovery
- Any new medications or prescriptions to be filled
- Any needed equipment or supplies
- Date when you need to see your doctor and/or specialist
- Which procedures and tests were done during the hospital stay and that results were sent to your doctor or specialist
- The call-back number and name of the unit or hospital if you have any questions
- The phone number of a Home Health Agency affiliated with the hospital if you feel you need more assistance at home

Make sure medications listed on your discharge summary match those you have at home. Follow up with your doctor if you have any questions about your medication list. Properly dispose of any medications discontinued during your hospital visit.

**Follow NICHE on Social Media**



**Why NICHE?** Choose a NICHE hospital or healthcare facility to make sure you or your family member gets the best care. The NICHE network has hospitals and healthcare organizations in the U.S., Canada, Bermuda and Singapore committed to making care as safe and positive as possible for older adults. Go to [nicheprogram.org](http://nicheprogram.org) to find a NICHE hospital or healthcare facility near you.

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## Patient Environment

**Definition:** A patient's physical and social surroundings

**Why Is It Important?** A safe and comfortable environment for the patient can result in **better** outcomes. It can reduce the chance of depression and delirium in the hospital, leading to a faster recovery. A safe, secure, "healing environment" includes **special considerations** that encourage mobility, promote socialization, and create a "homelike environment." An atmosphere that relaxes the mind, body and soul can help **speed physical** and psychological recovery.

### What You Can Do:

- 1. A single-patient room** may provide greater privacy, more opportunities for family interaction and better sleep.
- 2. Create your home-away-from-home** with comfort items like a favorite pillow or blanket and familiar items like photos and books.
- 3. Bring a personal music system** for your hospital stay (iPod, CD player, etc.) with ear phones. Music will reduce anxiety and pain levels.
- 4. Make sure** paths to your bathroom, chair and door are clear to help eliminate the risk of falls. Ask your nurse, family or friend for help with this.
- 5. Open the window** curtains during the day for natural light.
- 6. Simple conversation** with nurses, family, friends, and other patients can help provide a relaxing environment.
- 7. Ask for nice-smelling flowers** as gifts for your room.
- 8. Take walks** or have someone help you to the solarium, gardens or other pleasant areas in the hospital.
- 9. Make sure** controls for nurse call, lighting, telephone, television, and radio are within easy reach.



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