

How To Survive A Hospital Stay



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Introduction

Staying at a hospital can be a harrowing experience. Whether it is just for routine observation or admission due to a severe illness, there is something about hospital stays that make people nervous. But the truth to the matter is that hospital stays can be a humbling experience and it becomes less stressful when you are well-prepared and informed.

As such hospital stays, regardless of its duration, can be tolerable as long as you know what to expect and what to do. Thus, this eBook will serve as your in-depth guide on how to survive hospital stays.

In this eBook, you will be able to learn about the types of hospital stays and how to prepare for each admission, the risks involved and how to prevent them from happening, how to pass the time especially if you have a long confinement, and what to do upon discharge.

It is the aim of this book to give you everything that you need to know to survive hospital stays prior to admission, during admission, and upon discharge. This book is not only aimed to patients but also concerned family members and primary caregivers who want to ensure that their loved ones are comfortable during the duration of their hospital stay.



Chapter 1:

Understanding Hospital Stays



Hospitals are one of the most crucial institutions of modern health systems. In the past years, the occupancy rate of hospitals is about 64% to which patients who are 61 years old and above are the usual demographics to be admitted. Hospital stays are necessary for the well-being of patients, but it can be taxing not only to the patients but to their families as well. There are so many things that you need to know about hospital stays and as such it is best to be informed about the different types of hospital stays as well as other information related to it.

Types of Hospital Stays

In general, there are two types of hospital stays depending on the nature of your visit and these include (1) elective admission and (2) emergency admission. However, it is important to take note that there are some variations to these admissions and they will be discussed in this book in the succeeding pages.

Elective Admission

As the name implies, elective hospital stay is when you have a known medical condition or complaint that requires further treatment or surgery. This type of admission is planned between you and your doctor. In most cases, the admission can be delayed or immediate depending on what your doctor sees fit.

Before being admitted to the hospital, you may be instructed to get the necessary lab works such as X-rays, blood tests, and ECGs prior to your hospital stay. The doctor will use the lab works to determine the course of action that will be done given your current condition. Your doctor will also notify you of what to prepare prior to the admission. If you need elective surgery, for instance, your doctor may require you to obtain bags of blood for the possibility of transfusion during the surgery.

The benefit of this type of admission is that you can come prepared. Aside from mentally preparing yourself for the hospital stay, you can also talk with your doctor if the procedure that will be done on you is covered by your insurance or not. Prior to the admission, you can talk with your health insurance agent and make the necessary preparations.

When you are ready to be admitted, you will need to come to the hospital's admitting office instead of the emergency department.



Emergency Admissions

Emergency admissions occur when a patient is ushered through the emergency department. You may arrive at the hospital in an ambulance or in your own car. This type of admission occurs when you need urgent treatment, unexpectedly.

When you arrive in the emergency department, you will be assessed through the process called *triage* wherein a specialist emergency nurse or a triage nurse will assess your condition and assess how badly you need treatment. This is also the time when you get first aid help.

If your condition does not need immediate attention, you will be asked to wait in the waiting room. The waiting time will have to depend on how busy the emergency department is and whether there are patients who require more urgent attention than you. Once you are assessed, however, you may be admitted to a specialized holding unit.

There are different types of emergency admissions and it is crucial to know about these variations so that you know how to handle yourself in the emergency room. Below are the variations of emergency hospital stays that you need to know:

- **Observation admission:** This type of emergency admission takes place if the patient needs to undergo diagnostic testing. During this time, the physician might let the patient undergo different testing. For instance, if a patient is suspected to suffer from heart problems, the doctor might need the patient to undergo a stress test, cardiac characterization, and others. You will be eventually discharged within 24 to 48 hours if there are no positive indications of a serious disease. If there are positive signs of a serious condition, you will be upgraded to a full admission.
- **Transfer:** Although transfer admissions can also be categorized as planned admissions, most patients are transferred for emergency admission. This often occurs for various reasons including when (1) the hospital is not well-equipped to conduct the treatment, (2) the insurance company will not cover the treatment at the current hospital being admitted to, (3) you request a transfer at any time, and (4) hospital bed availability is low.



Process for Hospital Admission

As a patient, you are not admitted to the hospital without any serious reasons. It is essential to note that hospitals are not reckless in admitting patients as hospital beds are very important commodities. Thus, there are many factors that doctors consider before admitting you to the hospital. These reasons include patient's medical problem, history related to the current medical condition, possibility of a medical problem being serious, abnormal laboratory tests, abnormal physical exams, unstable vital signs, doctor's diagnosis, failure of outpatient care to improve condition, and surgical procedures necessary to name a few.

Once your doctor recommends you for hospital admission, you will then be admitted to a certain level of care within the hospital. This means that the level of care can be downgraded or upgraded any time depending on your current medical condition. Below are the different care levels within the hospital.

- **Emergency department holding unit:** Unplanned hospital admissions start in this department before you are moved to another unit until a bed becomes available. The transfer might take time especially in busy hospitals. In the meantime, the emergency doctor will continue to provide care. However, if your condition is life-threatening, you may need to be moved into another unit.
- **Intensive care unit (ICU):** This unit is reserved for the sickest patients who require close supervision by the medical team. It is equipped with the necessary equipment to help the patient.
- **Cardiac care unit (CCU):** Similar with ICU, this care unit require close monitoring and is reserved for people with heart problems.
- **Pediatric intensive care unit (PICU):** This care unit is reserved for children.
- **Neonatal intensive care unit (NICU):** This care unit is for newborn children.
- **Surgical intensive care unit:** This unit is reserved for people who have undergone surgical procedures.
- **Telemetry unit:** This unit is for people who need close cardiac monitoring but does not need to stay in intensive care.



Chapter 2:

Preparing for Your Hospital Stay



Going to a hospital can be stressful and can cause a lot of anxiety not only to patients but also their families. However, you can make your stay as comfortable as possible as long as you prepare. Preparing for a hospital stay is applicable to patients who have their admissions planned days or weeks ahead by their attending physicians before a medical procedure such as surgery. But this does not mean that some tips are not applicable for those who are admitted on emergency basis.

The most important part of preparing for your hospital stay is the pre-admission. You might be asked by your physician to attend a pre-admission clinic designed to confirm your personal details including your medical history, laboratory tests necessary, and many others that will assist your doctors in terms of giving the right treatment to you. It is extremely helpful to bring someone during the pre-admission who will help take down notes and ask questions for you if you feel too overwhelmed to even ask.

Choosing A Doctor

Finding a reputable and experienced doctor is critical for the success of your hospital stay. If you are working with your physician for a long time, then you can move to the next step. However, there are some situations wherein you might need a specialist to treat your malady. While it is common for your primary care physician to make recommendations, you still have a choice to seek as many second opinions as you want until you find the right doctor who will give you treatment. Thus, below is a checklist that can help you find the right doctor.

- **Ask recommendations from your primary care physician:** Asking recommendations is important but make sure that the recommended doctors are approved by your insurance company. That way, your insurance can still cover their fees.
- **Learn as much as you can on the prospective doctors:** If you have been recommended to undergo surgery and you did not get a solid recommendation from your primary care physician, you can learn about prospective surgeons as much as you can. Learn about the track record of the surgeons and their previous training. There are so many online resources out there that will provide you all these details at the tip of your fingertips.
- **Seek consultation with the prospective doctors:** Before deciding to choose a doctor, it is important that you talk with prospective doctors about your



treatment needs. Ask as many questions as you can such as the nature of the surgical procedure that will be done on you, complications, success rates, and many others will help you with the decision process. You can also ask your surgeon to provide you with references from patients who are willing to talk to you about their experience.

Choosing A Hospital

Choosing a hospital is a matter of preference. This is especially true if your doctor is connected to several clinics or health institutions. But recent surveys suggest that when patients choose a hospital, they likely choose the facility where their doctors are connected to. But nevertheless, it is still important that you learn how to choose the right hospital. Below are the tips when choosing a hospital for your admission.

Check the Hospital's Ratings

The most important thing that you need to consider is the rating of the hospital. Even if you don't have a choice about the hospital where you are going to stay in, knowing its rating can help you identify potential problems and be prepared to face such risks. When it comes to hospital ratings, there are three major gauges that you need to look out for and they are as follows:

- **Patient experience:** Patient experience is critical in knowing whether a hospital has a good reputation or not. The ratings will tell you whether previous patients would recommend their friends, families, or even strangers to stay in that particular hospital. Patients rate the hospital not only in its facilities but also the services provided by the medical staff.
- **Patient outcomes:** Patient outcomes refer to how well the hospitals care for the patients and ensure that the patients do not get readmitted to the hospital due to hospital-acquired infection. It also refers to how successful the patients were treated during their stay in the hospital.
- **Hospital practices:** This refers to how the hospital implements their best practices in terms of how treatment is administered, patient interaction, and basically everything that is related to running a health institution.



Location and Accessibility

As a patient, you are more likely to choose a hospital that is accessible and near your place. If you can find a hospital with a good reputation and offers the treatment that you are looking for as well as accept your health insurance, then you can put that on top of your list.

However, there are times when patients, after receiving a blow about a serious diagnosis, would often ask doctors where the best place in the world to get treatment. This is especially true among patients who are suffering from rare medical conditions where only a few institutions are willing to take on the case.

If you are willing to travel to get medical treatment abroad, then finding a good doctor and hospital is essential for you. But before you opt to be a medical tourist, you have to take note that seeking treatment abroad might have limited or no insurance coverage at all. Moreover, you need to shoulder your travel and lodging on your own. But some hospitals provide such services to their foreign patients.

And without your primary care doctor nearby, you will receive disjointed care from many unfamiliar specialists. Thus, it is important that you have a family member with you who will help you make decisions.

While going abroad to seek treatment is very attractive to many patients, it is still highly recommended to seek treatment in hospitals near you unless your primary care provider strongly recommends that you seek help elsewhere.

Know Your Insurance Coverage

When choosing the right hospital, it is also important to know what your health insurance company will cover. This will help you avoid some shocking surprises once the waves of bills arrive. Call your insurance company to verify what medical services they can cover that are related to your treatment. Below are the questions that you can ask:

- Which hospitals are included in your insurance plans network?
- Are there any differences between in-network and out-of-network costs?
- Does the medical procedure require pre-authorization?

As much as possible, ask for information in writing in case you experience disputes later.



Helpful Checklist When Choosing A Hospital and Doctors

Deciding on which doctors to seek help as well as the hospital to stay can be complicated but necessary as your decision is tantamount to the success of your treatment. Thus, below is a checklist that you can use to help you decide which hospitals to choose.

	Things to Consider When Looking for The Right Hospital
<input type="checkbox"/>	Find out which hospitals they are employed.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask which hospitals, in their opinion, will give the best care for your current condition.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask if the hospitals participate in Medicare or other health insurance plans.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask if you need to be admitted in a specialty hospital or not.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask if you need a surgeon or other specialists.
<input type="checkbox"/>	If you are referred to a specialist, seek consultation with them and ask about their experience and success in treating a particular condition.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask who will be responsible for your care during your hospital stay.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Will you need care after discharge?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is there any alternative to hospital care?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do I need permission from my health plan before being admitted to the hospital?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do I want a hospital that is located near my family and/or friends?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the hospital have convenient visiting hours?

Patient Rights and Responsibilities

All healthcare providers ensure that all patients are treated with dignity and respect at all times. It is good to note that your rights as a patient is listed in the hospital's Patient's Bill of Rights so make sure that you get a copy of one when you are admitted in the hospital. But for the sake of discussion, below are your rights and responsibilities as a patient.

Patient Rights

As a patient, you are protected with many layers of rights. This is to ensure that you will receive considerate and respectful care throughout your hospital stay. Below are your rights as a patient. Remember, that should any one of your rights be violated, you can always complain at any branch of the Department of Public Health. In a nutshell, you have the right to:

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- Receive treatment regardless of your age, ancestry, disability, color, gender identity, genetic information, medical condition, race, religion, sex, language, and other status.
- Receive respectful and considerate care at all times and have your personal beliefs respected.
- Get notified by your physician to be admitted to the hospital.
- Receive treatment in an environment that is free from abuse, harassment and exploitation of all forms.
- Access protective services from government agencies should neglect or abuse occur.
- Know the name of your physician as well as the names of the other medical staff that will see and attend to you.
- Receive information about your health status, treatment, recovery prospect and outcomes of care communicated to you in terms that you can easily understand.
- Receive information about proposed procedures or treatments which you may need so that you can decide to continue or refuse the treatment. These include description of the treatment, risks involved, alternative course of action, and the name of the doctor who will carry out the procedure. However, except for emergencies, this right might be waived.
- Have your privacy respected. All case discussion, examination, consultation, and treatments are confidential and should not be divulged to other individuals not involved in your well-being.
- You have the right to refuse treatment and be informed of the possible consequences of your decision.
- If you are to be transferred to another facility, you have the right to be informed about the reasons.
- Be informed if any experimental drugs or treatments are administered to you, how it will affect your care, and have the right to refuse participation at any time and for any reason.
- Be provided with reasonable continuing care once discharged.
- Have the right to examine and receive explanation about your medical bills.
- If the patient is adjudicated as incompetent according to the law, unable to communicate his or her wishes, or a minor, the patient's rights apply to their legal guardian, next of kin, or authorized representative to exercise the rights of the patients.
- Be free from any restraints or seclusion of any form used as discipline or retaliation by the hospital staff.



Patient Responsibilities

While you need to know about your rights as a patient and ensure that they [your rights] are upheld and never violated, it is also crucial that you know and perform your responsibilities. By doing so, you will be able to develop a good relationship with your medical care providers.

- **Do due diligence:** To make informed decisions, it is your responsibility to gather as much information that you need. You need to ask questions to understand your condition as well as fully understand all documents that you need to sign.
- **Always ask questions and understand:** If the explanation about your condition or treatment is not clear, always ask questions.
- **Be honest:** When talking with your primary care provider, give accurate and complete report of your medical history or the changes in your health.

What to Bring to The Hospital

You don't just go to the hospital for admission without preparing the necessary things. What you need to know is that what you bring to the hospital is necessary for your care and is also crucial for your survival during your hospital stay. Thus, below are the things that you need to bring not only during an elective admission, but also emergency hospital stays.

- Identification cards and emergency contacts such as student ID and driver's license.
- List of all allergies with specific reactions.
- List of current medication and treatments that you are using whether it is an over-the-counter medication, herbal treatments, aromatherapy, and supplements of all sorts.
- List of all medical conditions.
- List of all surgical procedures undertaken in the past.
- Provide the names of your primary care physician and specialist.
- Bring a signed copy of the patient's advance directive especially if the patient is underage or mentally incapacitated.
- Bring all cards and documents pertaining to insurance coverage.

Preparing Your Body and Your Mind



It is perfectly normal for patients to feel anxious and scared during hospital admissions especially if they are going to undergo a scheduled surgical procedure. Most of the fear is based on the feeling of not having control over what is going to happen in the hospital. This is especially true for patients who will have a first-time experience being in a hospital. Whatever your reasons are for being admitted, it is crucial that you prepare both your mind and body.

How to Prepare Your Body

Staying in the hospital can make you lethargic. This is especially true if you stay there for a bit of time. When the date of your hospital admission and surgery comes to a close, you should take charge of some important things, as follows:

- **Hygiene:** You need to maintain proper hygiene to avoid infection. The night before the surgery, make sure that you wash your body to reduce the risk of infection. If it is impossible for you to wash by yourself, you can ask a caregiver to wipe down your body with a soap solution to clean you up.
- **Medication:** Take note that there are some medications that you should avoid taking before your surgery. Blood thinners, for example, should be avoided as early as a week prior to surgery to avoid any problems.
- **Diet and nutrition:** Diet and nutrition is very critical during your hospital stay. If you are admitted to the hospital because you need to undergo surgery, you need to stop eating eight hours before the scheduled surgery. An empty stomach will prevent the possibility of coughing and gagging thus causing the contents in the stomach to go into the lungs. Further, it is also logical to keep your body in optimal condition before going into surgery.
- **Contact lenses and jewelry:** All other extraneous objects such as contact lenses and jewelry should be removed prior to admission and surgery. While some physicians may allow patients to wear extraneous items, the final decision is usually left to the anesthesiologist during the surgery.
- **Perfumes and cosmetics:** Wearing perfumes, cosmetics, lotions, deodorants, and others are not allowed during the day of the surgery as they contain chemicals that may interact during the treatment and recovery.



How to Prepare Your Mind

Most people experience high levels of anxiety before their hospital admission. Their anxiety gets worse especially when the date of the surgery gets close. Many studies show that 40% of adults who underwent surgical procedures experienced high levels of anxiety. Anxiety has adverse effects especially during the recovery of the patient. There are ways on managing anxiety during your hospital stay and below are the things that you can do to mentally prepare yourself.

- **Learn as much as you can about your medical procedure:** Learning about the medical procedure that you will undergo is very important so that you can understand what it is all about and dispel some of your fears and anxieties. When learning about your treatment, make sure that you do not just read some random blogs. There are many great resources that you can search online so that you can learn more about your medical treatment.
- **Talk to your surgeon and anesthesiologist:** You can talk to your surgeon and anesthesiologist about the medical treatment that you are about to go through. It is also good to ask questions such as the types of drugs that you will be given prior to the surgery. It is also important to ask about pain management and your many options so that you know what to expect after the surgery.
- **Use guided imagery to relax:** Use guided imagery to help you relax such as breathing techniques to reduce your anxiety.
- **Listen to relaxing music:** Another way to relax is to listen to music especially if you are in the holding area and awaiting your schedule.
- **Use other forms of therapy:** Other techniques include aromatherapy, pet therapy, and touch therapy.

Understanding Advance Directives

Unfortunately, not all patients are aware of their condition when they are admitted for hospital stay. This is the reason why advance directives are necessary. Also called *living will*, an advance directive is a statement or document made by the patient that indicates his or her will regarding the medical care that they want in case they become incapacitated due to a life-threatening disease. In a nutshell, it explains your wishes whether you want your healthcare provider to withhold some types of care if your medical condition goes downhill.



The document of the advance directive should be given to the nurse or doctor and that a family member should always keep it near the patient at all times. The thing is, advance directives make the patient's voice heard even when they can no longer communicate.

It allows you to appoint someone to make health care decisions on your behalf or withhold treatments based on your wishes. Below are the most common advance directives that patients can implement during their hospital stay.

Medical Power of Attorney

Also called *health care proxy*, this document allows you to appoint someone such as your next of kin to make decisions for you regarding your medical care once you are no longer able to make decisions by yourself. Before getting a health care proxy, make sure that the individual that you appoint is someone who understands your wishes and someone you trust who will make decisions that is best for your welfare.

Do Not Resuscitate (DNR)

This advance directive dictates the types of procedures that you do not want to be carried out in case you go into a life and death situation. As the name implies, this directive implies that the patient does not want to be resuscitated back to life. Below are the treatments that are usually not carried out when the patient requested for this advance directive.

- Cardiac compressions if your heart stops
- Electric shock applied on the chest to make the heart beat again
- Being placed in a ventilator or lung machine if you stopped breathing

While the definition of this advance directive is straightforward, there are other considerations that you need to take note when applying the *Do Not Resuscitate*. For example, when you want a DNR order when your heart stops beating, and your lungs stops breathing yet still want to receive antibiotics and other care in the hopes that these treatments will cure you. Thus, in this case, DNR does not mean that patients should not be treated unless specified. So, if you opt for this advance directive, make sure that you know what it means exactly and to relay the information to your close relative or kin.



Chapter 3:

Risks Involved with Hospital Stay



Hospitals are thought to be the safest place for sick people to stay as patients get round-the-clock access to skilled health care from professionals. While it sounds to be a safe place, there are several risks involved when staying in the hospital. If you are a patient or who has a loved one staying in the hospital for several days already, it is crucial to know what these risks are so that you are at a better position to prevent them from happening. Thus, this chapter will discuss the risks involved in hospital stay and what you can do to reduce your risk.

Surgical Complications

Ideally, a patient should not have complication after surgery. The thing is, some complications are avoidable while some are simply a part of the risk of the procedure. Patients who suffer from surgical complications are usually those that have undergone major surgical procedures and have stayed in the hospital for a longer time duration.

Anesthesia Complications

Anesthesia complications are common post-operative complications. In general, anesthesia complications are usually airway-related problems such as pneumonia but there are other secondary problems attributed to anesthesia complications and these include pressure sores, malignant hyperthermia, apnea, and allergic reactions to the anesthesia medication itself.

While the risk for anesthesia complication is likely, the problems are becoming low now as modern anesthetic practices are aimed at being safe. Moreover, this can be prevented as long as you discuss with your anesthesiologist and the medical team your options. When it comes to allergic reactions to anesthetics, the anesthesiologist usually checks first before injecting an appropriate anesthesia for you.

Post- Operative Pyrexia

Simply, post-op pyrexia is fever or an elevated temperature after the surgical procedure. This complication occurs because the body undergoes inflammatory responses to the site where the surgical incision was made.

Aside from inflammation on the surgical site, other types of post-operative pyrexia include embolism and abscess to name a few. This complication is minor, and it often



dissipated within 24 hours after the operation. It can also be managed by inflammatory drugs that the doctor may give you.

Hemorrhage or Bleeding

Hemorrhage is classified as either primary or reactionary. The former occurs when the blood vessel was cut during the surgery while the latter happens when the blood pressure rises during post-operation thus causing the blood vessels to start bleeding. Another type of bleeding is caused by secondary causes due to infection that eventually damages the blood vessels days after the surgery.

Since bleeding has multi-factorial origin, doctors provide different protocols to manage hemorrhage depending on its cause. Management of bleeding includes blood or fluid resuscitation, reversal of anti-coagulant effects, or surgical interventions. Drugs can also be given to reduce blood loss, or the patient may require blood transfusion to supplement the blood loss.

Damage to Adjacent Structures

Another surgical procedure that can occur is damage to adjacent structures. If not detected, it can result in leakage of bodily fluids within the body cavity. These include the bile and gastrointestinal contents. Damage to adjacent structures includes bleeding or, worse, sepsis. The clinical presentation of such damage depends on the affected structures as well as the extent of their damage.

Pain

Pain is always a risk with every hospital stay. This can be easily managed by pain medication. However, doctors need to prescribe an analgesic regimen based on the nature of surgery, patient's contradiction to different drugs, expectations, and pre-existing chronic pain problems, if any. Surgical bleeding should also be taken into consideration when managing pain, as chronic pain syndrome may develop as a type of complication to acute post-operative pain.



Nausea and Vomiting

Post-operative nausea and vomiting may lengthen the hospital admission. There are many reasons why vomiting and nausea may occur after surgery and these include motion sickness and types of drugs taken in. Moreover, the type of surgery can increase the likelihood of vomiting and nausea. Previous studies indicate that patients who underwent gynecological, ears, and eye surgeries are more likely to experience vomiting.

Nosocomial Infections

Nosocomial infections refer to infections that are acquired during hospital stay. According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the most common bacterial pathogen that causes nosocomial infections include *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, *Escherichia coli*, and *Staphylococcus aureus*.

Transmission of nosocomial infections includes direct contact, droplet transmission, airborne transmission, and vector-borne transmission. There are different types of nosocomial infections that patients can obtain during their hospital stay and below are examples of infections that patients are likely to experience during their hospital stay.

Surgical Site Infection (SSI)

Surgical Site Infections can complicate the recovery of the patient by 5%. There are many reasons why surgical site infections occur, but it can be aggravated by prolonged surgery and impaired immunity. If not treated immediately, surgical site infections can cause sepsis if not treated properly. Management of such type of infection includes antibiotics, suture removal, and open wound care.

Catheter Infection

By definition, a catheter is a tube inserted into the bladder to remove urine from the body. The tube can stay in place for extended periods of time thus they are called indwelling catheters. While the most popular type of catheter is the urinary catheter, there are other types of catheters used in different types of the body including the central venous catheter or the peripherally inserted central catheter line. Below is a discussion of the different types of catheter infection that patients are likely to be at risk of getting during their long hospital stay.



- **Central Venous Catheter Infection:** This type of infection is caused by the insertion of the central venous catheters positioned in the superior vena cava to administer medication, obtain samples for blood test and measure the central venous pressure. This type of catheter is placed on the neck, chest, groin, and through the veins in the arms. It should be inserted using aseptic techniques including wearing gloves and masks, proper skin preparation, and application of antibacterial dressing. Prolonged use of this catheter can lead to bloodstream infection and sepsis. To manage this type of infection, it is important for healthcare professionals such as nurses to review any signs of bacteremia and positive blood culture. Inflammation on the insertion site is not often common thus it is crucial to review the catheter daily. Central venous catheters should be removed as soon as they are no longer needed. If such infection occurs, treatments may include the use of antibiotics and the immediate removal of the catheter.
- **Urinary Catheter:** Urinary catheters are used to drain urine directly from the bladder into a collecting bag. A catheter is usually inserted if a patient suffers from incontinence or after the surgery. Most patients with prolonged catheter use often develop urinary tract infection particularly in the bladder or kidneys. This is especially true among patients who have previous history of urinary tract infections. Management of urinary tract infection includes the removal of the catheter and the use of antibiotics.

Hospital- Acquired Pneumonia

Hospital-acquired pneumonia is the second most common type of hospital-acquired infection. It accounts for 15% to 20% of the total nosocomial cases in the country and the most common cause of death in intensive care units. It is a type of pneumonia acquired during a hospital stay of at least 48 hours after admission and can lengthen the hospital stay for a few more weeks.

Unlike community-acquired pneumonia, this type of nosocomial infection is caused by bacterial infection instead of a virus. Studies suggest that the common causes for hospital-acquired pneumonia include *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, *Haemophilus influenza*, and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*.

Preventing nosocomial infection is necessary to reduce the risk of sepsis as well as not prolong the hospital stay of patients. Proper implementation of quality assurance measures to health care providers as well as evidence-based management. It is therefore important that your healthcare providers implement proper hygiene protocol and monitor indoor air quality.



Hospital Malnutrition

Nutrition has a critical role in the health of a patient during his or her hospital stay. Didn't you know that 3 out of 5 older adults in hospitals experience malnutrition and that 1 in 3 patients who leave the hospital are in worse nutrition when they enter? This does not mean, however, that hospitals are not feeding their patients right. In fact, malnutrition in hospital admissions is caused by many reasons and doctors and nutritionists are working together to be able to prevent this condition.

Malnutrition is a prevalent condition even in acute hospital stays and is often linked to adverse outcomes such as poor immune system, muscle wasting, and impaired wound healing that eventually lengthens the hospital stay of the patient. It can also increase the chances of a patient for readmission. It can develop due to dietary intake deficiency, increased nutritional requirements associated with the state of disease, poor digestive absorption, and excessive nutrient losses.

Factors the Contribute to Malnutrition

There are several factors that contribute to malnutrition among patients. Studies suggest that most patients who are in their senior years fail to recognize the signs of malnutrition and mistake it as dehydration. Patients who have the inability to chew or swallow often experience malnutrition because of their inability to consume food. This is also true for people who suffer from a sensory loss such as taste and smell. On the other hand, patients who underwent surgery and are attached to ventilation and drain tubes are also unable to consume food thus they are at risk of developing acute malnutrition. Below is a table indicating important risk factors for malnutrition associated with hospital stays.

Risk Factors	Description
Frailty	Defined as a poor overall condition of the patient prior to and during hospitalization. People with frail bodies often lack the appetite to consume food.
Severe disability	Patients who have a problem with mobility such as moving their arms are unable to feed themselves. They may require the help from a caregiver for feeding.
Chronic conditions	Chronic conditions such as cancer, pneumonia, renal failure, and others may affect the appetite of patients.
Major surgery	Patients who underwent major surgery are restricted by their doctors to consume food for a few days. This will affect their



nutrition in the long run especially if the patient has a slow recovery after the surgery.

What to Ask Your Doctor About Malnutrition

Maintaining healthy nutrition during a hospital stay can do wonders for your recovery. If you or your loved one is going to be admitted to a hospital, it is important that you ask the doctor the right questions about nutrition. Below are the right questions to ask your healthcare provider.

- **What is my nutritional status?** You can ask your doctor to have your nutritional status screened before your hospital stay. That way, they will find out if you are at risk for malnutrition and what can be done to build your nutritional health with a help of a dietitian.
- **How do I know if I am malnourished?** Knowing the tell-tale signs of malnutrition is very important. Symptoms include trouble chewing, changes in appetite, and unusual weight loss. If you experience these signs during your hospital stay, make sure to inform your doctor.
- **How can I eat well once I get home?** After your hospital stay, it might be difficult for you to go about your chores such as grocery shopping for food or even cooking your meals. Plan ahead of time and get the help from your family to bring you meals or groceries. If your family lives far from you, hospital social workers can connect you easily to meal delivery as well as in-home care services so that you can still eat nutritious foods while recovering in your house.
- **Will medications interact with what I eat?** Certain prescription drugs will interact with the types of food that you eat. Moreover, some foods can affect your treatment. Make sure that you ask your doctor about the side effects of your prescribed medicine and whether you should take with or without food.
- **Which foods to eat and to avoid during my recovery?** Ask your doctor if there are foods that you should restrict or eat more to aid in your recovery. By doing so, you can stock up on snacks that are okay with your doctor. If you have to eat plain food, you can give them more flavor by using natural spices and herbs.

While it is normal for patients and their family to worry about malnutrition especially during long hospital stays, hospitals always implement nutritional care plans such as monitoring protocols so that proper intervention can be given.



Medication Errors

Medications are offered by health services throughout the world. However, with substantial and increasing medication use comes a growing risk of harm (1). This is compounded by the need to prescribe for an ageing population with increasingly complex medical needs and the introduction of many new medications. These issues are particularly relevant in primary care. In many cases, prescribing is initiated in primary care and those initiated in the hospital may also be continued in primary care.

Causes of Medication Errors

There are many factors that are linked to medication errors. In fact, medication errors are not only brought about by the poor judgment of the care providers but there are other reasons too. Below is a table that summarizes the most important factors that bring about medication errors. These factors include the health care provider, patient, and care team to name a few.

Associated Factors	Description
Health care professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of training - Inadequate knowledge and experience in administering drugs - Lack of knowledge about the patient - Overworked or fatigued healthcare worker - Poor communication between the patient and healthcare professional
Patients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Patient personality and attitude - Patient literacy - Complicated medical case involving several health conditions
Hospital work environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workload and time pressure on healthcare providers - Lack of standard protocols - Insufficient funds - Problems with the structure of the hospital and the entire physical environment (e.g. improper lighting, ventilation, and temperature)
Medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improper naming of medicines - Improper packaging
Healthcare provider's tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Repetitive systems for ordering and processing of medication - Inadequate patient monitoring



How to Deal with and Prevent Medication Errors

Medication errors are scary. The thing is that patients don't know if their nurses are giving them the wrong drug or dosage. In fact, several studies have explored different strategies on how to improve prescribing and reduce medication errors. While primary care providers reduce medication, errors using technology and constant education to healthcare providers, there are ways for you to reduce medication errors using the tips below:

- **Bring your medication:** When packing things for your hospital admission, it is important that you bring your medication. Your doctors need to know about every drug and prescription that you are currently taking. These include over-the-counter medication and supplements.
- **Keep a copy of your medication:** Whether in digital or written copy, keeping a copy of your medication can help your physician make the right decisions on what types of medications to give you as well as appropriate dosage so that the new medicine will not interact with the current one that you are taking.
- **Don't hesitate to ask:** Always ask your healthcare team whenever you are given a drug. Ask when a nurse comes and gives you a drug. What does it do and how much do you need? By asking questions, you will be able to lower the risk of errors.
- **Find out if you need to continue taking your regular medication:** If you have been taking regular maintenance medication for high blood pressure or diabetes, ask your doctor whether you need to continue taking them or not. Never assume that your doctors and nurses know that drugs that you are currently prescribed by your family doctor.
- **Make sure that the medicine delivered is for you:** It is never wrong to ask your nurse if the medicine delivered is for you. There might some cases wherein the nurse might make a mistake in delivering the meds because there are too many patients to attend to.
- **Keep notes:** Take down notes and create a list of drugs that you are taking together with its details, and why you need to take such medication. That way, you will easily notice any changes in your medication regimen.
- **Ask family to help you out:** There are times when you are not fully awake, or you are drowsy after the surgery thus it is more beneficial for you if you ask a family member to help keep track of the medication for you.



Other Risks for Your Hospital Stay

There are other risks that might happen to you during a hospital stay and it is important that you learn how to manage them so that you will be able to survive your hospital stay no matter how short or long it is.

Pressure Sores

During the hospital stay, your skin might be affected by lying in the hospital bed for a long time. The lack of mobility, poor diet, and hydration can often lead to pressure sores. Among older patients, the skin gets thin and very weak thus the skin easily gets injured and takes a longer time to heal.

Pressure sores are not only ordinary tears on the skin, but it can also lead to other problems such as permanent muscle loss as well as infection. The pain it causes can reduce your mobility but there is something that you can do to take care of your skin during your hospital stay. Below are the tips on how to protect your skin from pressure sores.

- Keep the skin dry and clear.
- Avoid products that dry the skin out such as soaps, talcum powder, and body washes.
- Use a water-based moisturizer every day and take extra care on the bony areas of the body.
- Check your skin daily and ask help from doctors especially if you notice some changes.
- If mobility is a problem, ask the nurse to change your position often.
- Hydrate completely by drinking a lot of water.
- Mind your nutrition as pressure sores can develop from people who lack proper nutrition.
- Try to sit out of the bed if you can.
- If you develop a wound, ask your healthcare providers for help and enlist the help of friends and family regarding the management of your pressure sores.
- Move as frequently as possible and try to shower, dress, or walk yourself to the toilet if you are able.



Drug Side Effects

Hospital stays carry a 5.5% risk of adverse drug reaction. Side effects can occur with intake of any prescription or non-prescription medications. After taking the medication, you might notice some changes in your body such as coughing or skin rashes. Drug side effects can differ from one patient to the other depending on the medical condition, age, weight, and medical history. The side effects can be severe or mild and they can happen at any time. It is therefore important that you inform your doctor or nurse if you experience changes in your body and you suspect of a drug reaction.

There are many reasons why drug reactions take place. For instance, antibiotics can trigger allergic reactions. This is the reason why it is a standard operating procedure for nurses to conduct skin test to determine if you are allergic to certain antibiotics or not. Supplements and drugs can also interact with one another.

To reduce the risk of drug side effects during a hospital stay, there are only a few things that you need to do including learning about your medication and informing your doctor about all types of medications (prescription and non-prescription) and supplements that you are taking in. It is also important to observe any changes—big or small—that occur in your body after intake of a particular medication.

Falls

Falls are common not only among elderly patients but those who have limited mobility due to surgery. Patients who are at risk of falls are also susceptible to injuries such as fractures or concussions that can eventually lead to longer hospital stays. It is therefore crucial for patients to learn how to reduce the risk of falls.

- Use the call light when you need help standing up or getting around. If you use the bathroom, ask the nursing staff to help you get to the bathroom to avoid accidental falls. If you still feel unsteady, you can use a portable urinal.
- Take your time getting out of the bed and sit at the edge of the bed a few seconds before standing up. This is especially true if you are taking medicines that may cause you to feel dizzy or drowsy.
- Wear non-slip footwear whenever you walk around your room or the bathroom.
- Wear your eyeglasses or hearing aids when you are awake as it increases your senses and perception when going around.
- Use a walker or a cane to provide you with support.
- Without a cane or proper support, never lean on the bedside table, IV pole, or furniture as they are also unstable. Instead, sit down on the edge of the bed and

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seek help.

- Ask the nurse to place the call light and your personal items within your reach before they leave the room.



Chapter 4:

Passing the Time Effectively in The Hospital



Recuperating inside the hospital is necessary so that you can recover your strength and vigor. However, a longer recuperating period can make patients feel very bored. If you have been recuperating in the hospital for some time and you feel that you are wasting your precious time doing nothing, then let this chapter serve as your guide on how you can productively pass the time during your hospital stay.

Ambulation

If you underwent a major surgical procedure, you might be unable to walk for a few days or so. While this is normal, doctors will often advise their patients to ambulate after surgery. Ambulation or early walking after the surgery is the most important things that you need to do in order to prevent health problems.

Remember that laying on the bed for a long time limits the blood flow of the legs thus resulting to edema on the extremities or deep vein thrombosis that can lead to blood clotting. Moreover, when the bones do not bear weight, they eventually lose minerals that can lead to osteoporosis. As such, patients are encouraged to walk even around the bed.

However, ambulating can be a challenging task, especially for an elderly patient. As much as possible, try to do this with a presence of a nurse or a family member to avoid falling. When ambulating, you are not expected to walk in the hospital hallways immediately. You can take baby steps such as dangling your legs on the bedside or trying to move from the bed to a chair.

At first, you might feel dizzy when you first get up but don't rush things. Take it slowly. Sit up slowly and sit on the side of the bed for a few minutes before you attempt to walk around.

Ambulation a few days after the surgery is very important because it promotes the efficient flow of oxygen within the body and helps maintain normal breathing. Moreover, it also helps tone your leg muscles as well as improves the function of your stomach and urinary tract.

Stress Relief Techniques

Staying in the hospital for a long time can induce a lot of stress to patients. Not only do patients feel physical stress brought about by their condition but also emotional stress. In



most cases, many patients feel negative emotions such as fear, exhaustion, and loneliness during their hospital stay.

There are many stress relief or relaxation techniques that patients can do to refocus their attention on other things instead of their stress so that they achieve peace and calm during their hospital stay. Below are types of stress relief techniques that you can easily employ during your hospital stay.

Autogenic Relaxation

This type of relaxation technique is all about using body awareness and visual imagery to reduce stress. Reciting a mantra, words or suggestions in your mind can help reduce your stress and calm your muscles. For instance, you can imagine a peaceful place and focus your attention on your controlled breathing while reciting a mantra silently. Thus, an autogenic relaxation is a mindful relaxation.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

This type of relaxation technique focuses on the tension and relaxation of the muscle groups instead of the breathing so that you become more aware of the present physical sensations. In this kind of relaxation technique, you work with different parts of the body. For instance, you can start with your head down to your toes and feel the sensations as you flex and relax your muscles.

Visualization

This type of relaxation technique uses mental images so that you can become calm and peaceful. You can visualize many things to incorporate your senses – sight, smell, sound, and touch. You can imagine walking near the ocean and smelling the sea breeze and listening to the crashing of the waves. This type of relaxation technique requires you to close your eyes and concentrate on your breathing.

Other Relaxation Techniques

There are so many forms of relaxation techniques that you can do to achieve relaxation. Other relaxation techniques that you can do include as follows:

- Deep breathing



- Massage
- Meditation
- Music and art therapy
- Aromatherapy

Mental Exercises

For elderly patients, the loss of memory can be a serious thing, especially during a long hospital stay. Hospital stays often does not do wonders for the cognition of the elderly patient. Thus, it is important to always do mental exercises to boost the memory. While reading a book or doing puzzles can be an engaging activity for most patients, elderly patients need more cognitive stimulation. Examples of activities to boost cognitive function are as follows:

- **Test your recall:** Make a list of things such as the name of your children, your favorite foods or just about anything that matters to you.
- **Do mental math:** Solving simple math problems can also be a great mental exercise for patients.
- **Practice a new language:** Use your downtime to learn a new language or some of its phrases. Studies suggest that learning a new language can reduce the risk of dementia.
- **Play Card games or board games:** playing card games and board games keeps you mentally alert and passes the time in a more fun manner. You can enjoy playing blackjack, Big and Little casino, Go fish, bridges and so much more.

Nutrition

Nutrition plays a very important role in the recovery of a patient. As malnutrition is a common risk of hospital stay, it is crucial for patients to nourish themselves. Nutrition for the sake of recovery is tailored to help patients get back on their feet. It is crucial that you give your body a nutritional reserve so that you can recover faster. So, if you want to be productive and want to regain your health, you can work with a dietitian to give you healthy foods. Below are the types of foods that you should start eating in order to stay healthy during your hospital stay.

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- **Vitamin C:** This nutrient can help repair wounds, ligaments, and tendons. Consume fruits that are rich in Vitamin C such as berries, baked potatoes, bell peppers, and broccoli.
- **Protein:** Protein is important in building the muscles. Consume lean proteins and plant-based proteins to build your muscles.
- **Calcium:** It is common for bones to lose its density and mineral deposit during a long hospital stay. Drinking milk will help replenish the lost minerals so that the bones do not get damaged easily.
- **Fiber:** It is important to maintain good digestion during your hospital stay as you are at risk of developing constipation. Consumption of fiber can help combat constipation. Eat a lot of plant-based foods and whole grain to increase your fiber intake.

Tips and Tricks for Making Your Hospital Stay Comfortable

The hospital environment is not a restful place for patients. With hospital staff always checking up on the patients to check their vitals, give medication, or draw bodily samples, it is no wonder why many patients suffer from a lot of stress. Aside from those mentioned above, below are important tips and tricks for making your hospital stay more comfortable.

- Bring a book or magazines so that you can read during your wake time.
- Bring a tablet loaded with movies.
- Bring toiletries so that you can still maintain good hygiene.
- Sleep mask and earplugs for restful and uninterrupted sleep.
- Mobile phones, gadgets, and their corresponding chargers.
- Washable fleece throw blanket or security blanket if desired.
- Pen and paper to keep track of your medication and to write down notes.
- Folder containing all documents necessary for your hospital admission.



Chapter 5: Going Home



Now that your doctor gives you a clean bill of health, this means that you are about to go home in a few days. Just because you are going home does not mean that you are already healthy. The main risk of a hospital discharge is that you might end up back in the hospital if you are not too careful. Thus, your healthcare team will have to discharge you if they believe that you no longer need inpatient care. When you are discharged, it is crucial to follow your doctor's instructions so that you can be on your way to recovery.

What Happens During Hospital Discharge

During the hospital discharge, your doctor will have to meet with you to give you his or her final instructions. It is important that you take down notes so that you remember your doctor's orders. Below are the specific things that you need to discuss with your doctor during your discharge:

- Your medical condition at the time of the discharge.
- A printed information of all your home medications.
- The types of follow-up care that you need.
- Types of medications to take including when and how to take them.
- What medical equipment you need and how to get them.
- Instructions on the types of food, drinks, and physical activities that you can do or avoid.
- Days and times of your follow-up appointments with the doctor.
- Phone number of whom to call in case you have questions.
- Instructions on who to call (preferably and advice nurse) to get advice after the hospital stay.
- What to expect at a new facility if you are not going home immediately.

What Happens After Hospital Discharge

After being discharged from the hospital, you should follow the instructions set by your doctor. If things are not clear to you, make sure that you call the hospital to ask about follow-up care. It is important that you show up during the follow-up appointment because your doctors will need to check your condition (whether you are recovering well or not) following the discharge.

It is important that you include your family as part of your recovery. They can help pick up your medication and go with you during your doctor's appointments. They can also assist you with feeding and other tasks that are difficult for you to do.