

# Supporting Going to the Hospital

A stay in the hospital can be stressful and confusing for anyone, including people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/ DD). People with I/DD should receive the same quality of care in a hospital as anyone else. The person also has the right to have a support person with them. Family members, advocates, or support workers may need to speak up to make sure this happens.

## Preparation and Planning

Planning the visit carefully with the hospital can help the person's stay go as smoothly as possible.

Most hospitals do pre-admission planning if possible. You can encourage the person to raise issues that need to be worked out to make the hospital visit go smoothly. It is important for the person with I/ DD to be involved in the process.



## Support the person to provide the hospital with these documents and information:

- A personal profile including information about how the person communicates and accommodations needed.
- Up-to-date health information and medication list.
- Details of who can consent to any treatment the person does not understand.
- Information about the person's personal care needs, including feeding and bathing. The person has the right to have a family member or support person with them for these reasons.

## The pre-admission plan might also include:

- A visit to tour the hospital or look at pictures of the facility and the equipment and health professionals that will be involved with the visit.
- If the person is likely to need behavioral support, a mental health professional may need to be involved.
- It may help to take some personal items along for their stay, such as photographs and games.

## Discharge and Follow-Up

Careful discharge planning and follow up will reduce the risk of problems with the person's recovery. Support the person by making sure they get clear information about:

- Any wound care or new medication.
- Any extra support the person may need when they leave the hospital.
- What follow up visits or treatment is needed.
- Work with the person and hospital staff to see how these needs will be met. If the person lives in supported accommodations, the manager or case manager needs to be involved in the process.
- Outpatient test and procedures will have some of the same planning and follow-up needs.



## Emergency Admissions

Although you cannot plan for emergencies, it is helpful to have a brief document on hand listing the person's medications, allergies, communication needs, swallowing and nutrition needs etc. This information can be included in a personal profile. Also, take the person's current medications to the hospital in their original containers.

## Hospital Environment

Hospitals are busy places 24 hours a day. Bright lights, buzzers, and regular observation can be disturbing and can cause challenging behaviors. Reassure the person you are supporting to advocate for their needs and work with staff to minimize the negative impact of the hospital.



### Acknowledgement

The Iowa Taking Charge of My Health (TCMH) curriculum, including power points, worksheets and fact sheets is inspired by Oregon's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) Taking Charge of my Healthcare Toolkit which can be found at <https://www.ohsu.edu/oregon-office-on-disability-and-health/taking-charge-my-health-care>.

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The information provided is for general use and not medical advice or intended to address any individual situation.