

Your Discharge Plan

Answers to common questions

This handout explains your role in creating your discharge plan. It also includes answers to common questions.

What is a discharge plan?

We want to make your hospital experience as comfortable as possible, and that includes making sure you are ready to leave the hospital at the time of your *discharge*. “Discharge” is the medical term for leaving the hospital.

Every patient who stays overnight at University of Washington Medical Center (UWMC) will have a discharge plan. If your stay is scheduled, discharge planning may start before you arrive. If your hospital stay is not planned in advance, preparing for your discharge will start soon after you arrive.

How does discharge planning work at UWMC?

Discharge planning can begin in the clinic or will begin soon after you are admitted to the hospital. When we talk with you about the goals of your hospital stay, we will also talk about planning for your discharge.

You and your family are our partners in planning a safe, sensible, and prompt discharge. Early planning means you and your family will have time to gather information, find resources, and review options.

Who can help with discharge planning?

Your doctor, nurse, social worker, rehabilitation therapist, dietitian, and pharmacist all work with you and your family to determine what care you will need after you are discharged.

If you need care, the social worker will help you find a skilled nursing facility, a home care or home health agency, hospice care if needed, and information about community resources. The social worker also provides emotional support to you and your family if you need it.



If you need care after discharge, your social worker will help you find the care to meet your needs.



Tell your nurse where you plan to fill your prescriptions when you are discharged.

How can I help with my discharge plan?

To help with your discharge plan:

- Ask your doctor how long your stay in the hospital is likely to be and what help you should have when you leave the hospital.
- Tell your nurse where you plan to fill your prescriptions when you are discharged. You may want to use the UWMC pharmacy or one near your home.
- Talk with your family and friends who will be helping you after discharge. Ask them how they can help and how much time they will be able to give. Tell your nurse if you do not have someone who can help you at home.
- Tell your nurse how you plan to get home. There may be restrictions on how you may travel. Your nurse or social worker can help you make transportation plans, if needed.

We aim to discharge patients early in the day. But, many factors affect when you are ready to be released from the hospital. The actual time will vary based on individual patient and family needs and your health care team's ability to confirm your discharge arrangements.

What should I bring to the hospital to help plan for my discharge?

- Health insurance card
- Pharmacy or drug benefit card (this is part of many insurance cards)
- The phone number of your pharmacy, if you do not plan to fill your prescriptions at UWMC
- Legal papers about your health care, such as a Health Care Directive (Living Will) and Power of Attorney, if you have them
- Phone numbers of family or friends you may want contacted during your stay
- Glasses, hearing aids, dentures, canes, or any other health aids that you use
- Current photo identification if you are traveling by plane

It is best to leave valuables at home, but please plan how you will pay for prescriptions, your ride home if you plan to take a taxi or bus, or for parking if you bring your own car.

Note: You may not be able to drive yourself or travel by bus or taxi alone when you leave the hospital.

What if I need help at home?

There are 2 kinds of health care services that can take place in your home: *home health* and *home care*.

Home health provides the skilled services of a nurse or a physical, occupational, or speech therapist. To receive home health, you must have:

- A condition that makes it hard for you to leave home
- A doctor's order

Home health is often covered by insurance and will be arranged by your social worker.

Home care programs usually do not include skilled health care services and are not covered by insurance. These programs may include help with:

- Transportation
- Bathing
- Dressing
- Feeding
- Housework
- Cooking

Your social worker can give you a list of private-pay home care agencies so that you and your family can arrange for this help. Some long-term care insurance may cover home care.

How is care in a skilled nursing facility arranged?

Due to the demand for hospital services, we cannot keep you here after you no longer need hospital care.

But, if you and your doctor determine that you need the special services of a skilled nursing facility, your social worker will meet with you and your family and give you a list of facilities. From that list, you will need to choose 3 or 4 that you prefer.

We make every effort to arrange for you to receive care in one of your top choices.

What if I need rehabilitation services at discharge?

Rehabilitation ("rehab") can occur in the hospital Rehab Unit, in a skilled nursing facility, or in your home, depending on your needs.

If needed, your doctor will order an evaluation for in-hospital rehabilitation. Admission to UWMC's inpatient Rehab Unit is based on:



Ask your nurse to review your care plan with you so that you will know the goals for your stay.

- Your diagnosis and condition
- Your expected progress
- Your insurance coverage
- Room availability

We're Here to Help

Every patient has a care plan for their hospital stay. Ask your nurse to review your care plan with you so that you will know the goals for your stay.

Your nurse, social worker, doctor, or financial counselor can answer questions that you or your family may have, or they can direct you to someone who can help.

Here are some phone numbers that may help you while you are in the hospital:

Social Work and Care Coordination

206-598-4370

Call weekdays 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., or ask your doctor or nurse to make a referral to Social Work and Care Coordination.

Financial Counseling

206-598-4320

Financial Counseling can help with questions about paying your hospital bills. Call weekdays, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Other Contact Numbers
