



Navigating a *safe* transition from hospital to home

RETURNING HOME GUIDE



INTRODUCTION

Returning home from the hospital is usually a happy occasion, but it can be stressful as well—especially if you're unprepared. The transition from a hospital or rehabilitation center to home takes some advance planning to help ensure a safe and comfortable recovery for you or your loved one.

At SYNERGY HomeCare, we understand that people are happiest and healthiest when they recover where they are most comfortable—in their homes. It is our hope that this guide will provide tools, tips and strategies for your or your loved one's safe transition home.

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What is discharge planning?

Health care professionals use the term “discharge” to refer to a patient’s transition between health care locations, health care providers or levels of care as a person’s care needs change. For example:

- Moving from one floor of the hospital to another
- Moving from the hospital to a rehabilitation center
- Moving from a rehabilitation center to home
- Moving from the hospital to home

Planning for a discharge is vital for a successful recovery. It’s also important to share the plan with everyone involved in the person’s care. A good discharge plan will include the following information for you or your loved one:

- Doctors’ and specialists’ names and contact information
- Diagnosis, medications and treatments
- Dietary needs
- Where the patient will be living (include the address)
- Primary caregiver and contact information
- Contact information for all caregivers (paid and unpaid)
- Patient’s personal preferences, such as daily routine, when they eat meals, etc.

Why is discharge planning important?

Older adults and individuals living with certain disabilities or health conditions are at higher risk of severe injury and illness when moving from one setting to another. Mapping out important steps for discharge when you or your loved one is admitted can help reduce those risks.

A detailed discharge plan that is shared among the patient, staff, family and caregivers can help:

- Prevent additional illness and injury such as injuries caused by falls
- Reduce risk of health complications
- Reduce risk of hospital readmission within 30 days
- Ensure that hospital or rehabilitation staff provide adequate support
- Ensure no parts of a care plan are overlooked
- Provide patients and families with the information needed to be prepared to provide adequate care or arrangements
- Ensure medications are checked and taken properly
- Address transportation concerns
- Provide clarity around follow-up care
- Prevent delay of laboratory tests results and ensure they are understood
- Make advance care directives (Powers of Attorney, Living Will, Do Not Resuscitate Order) known to all involved



What is your role as a family member?

As a family member, you can advocate for your loved one by asking health care providers questions, expressing your concerns and requesting clarification when there’s something you don’t understand. The more information you have, the better you can care for your loved one.

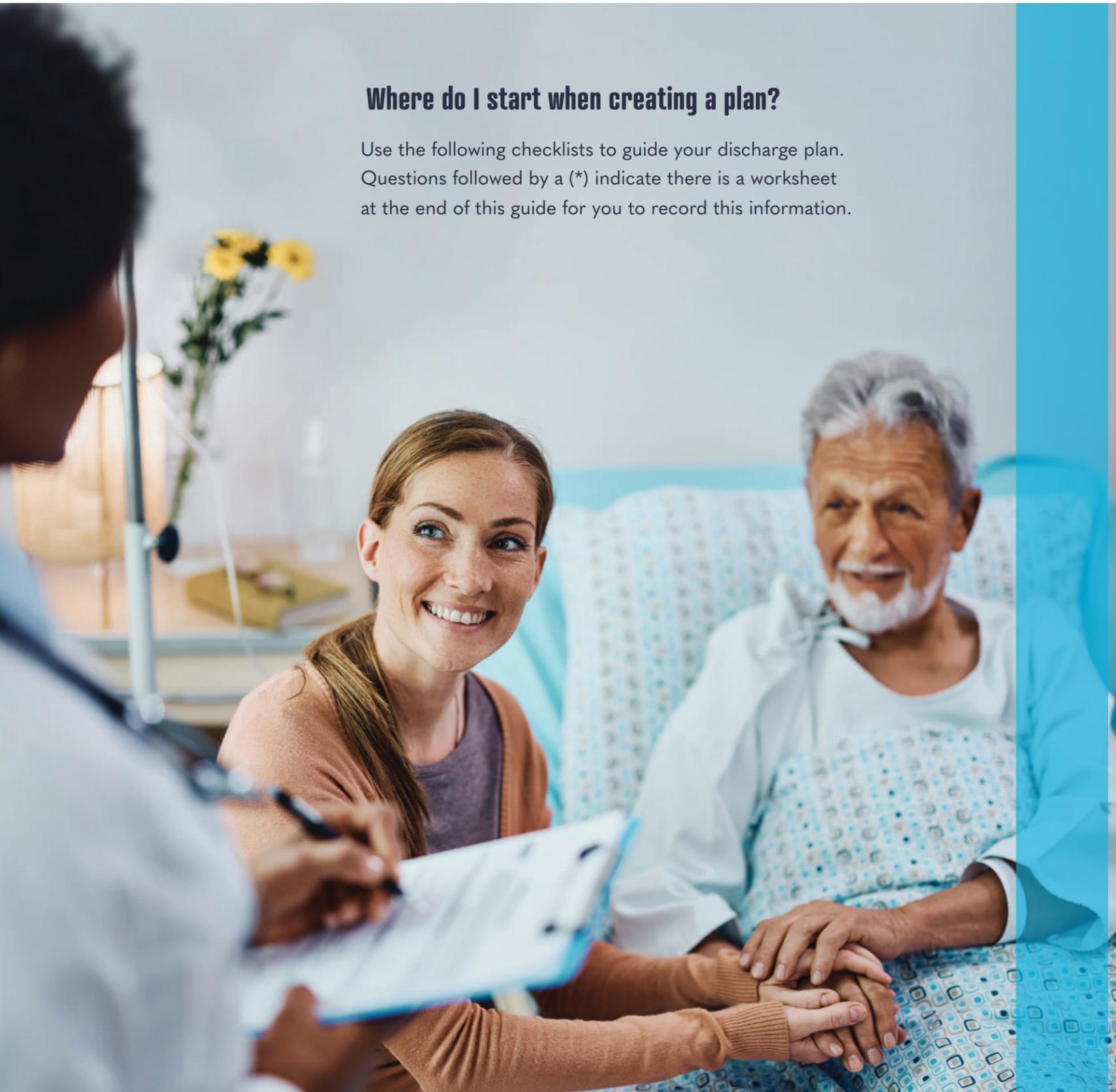
You can also help your loved one evaluate resources to pay for care following a hospital discharge. In-home care offers value as well as flexibility to fit any budget and can be covered by:

- Private pay
- Long-term care insurance
- Veteran’s benefits
- Government agencies

Keep the information you gather from care professionals in a notebook or use the worksheets at the end of this guide so you can refer back to it later.

Where do I start when creating a plan?

Use the following checklists to guide your discharge plan. Questions followed by a (*) indicate there is a worksheet at the end of this guide for you to record this information.



Before admission TO THE HOSPITAL

- Make a complete list of current medications/ treatments.*
- Make a complete list of diagnoses.
- Make a complete list of doctors and specialists, dates of appointments and outcomes of visits.*
- Ensure that you have provided all emergency contact information to the hospital staff and ensure that it is in your loved one's medical record. Double check to ensure your loved one's name and other identifying information is correct on their medical chart.

While in THE HOSPITAL

A checklist for family members

- Request list of the medications that are being given to your loved one.*
- Ask if any new medications were administered; if so, ask which ones and why.*
- Ask if any medications were discontinued; if so, ask why.*
- Ask for a copy of the Medication Administration Record (MAR) to ensure that the medications your loved one is receiving matches what is being stated by their health care providers.
- Ask how to best communicate with your loved one's health care providers following discharge.*
- Continue ongoing communication with health care providers so that you can plan for in-home care.
- Schedule a meeting with your loved one's health care team prior to discharge. Ideally, this meeting will include the patient, physicians, nurses, specialists, therapists, social worker, case manager, family members, Health Care Power of Attorney and caregivers.

Questions to ask

DURING THE DISCHARGE MEETING

When meeting with the health care team, ask the following questions, which will help determine your loved one's care plan:

- What equipment or home modifications are needed? For example, a wheelchair, raised toilet seat, grab bars in the bathroom or handrails might be required at home.*
- Does the discharge summary list all of the new and old medications, and are they all thoroughly addressed?*
- Is home health or home care necessary? **Home health** helps with medical care at home for a short period of time, while **home care** helps with non-medical care (bathing, dressing, dining, shopping/errands) for a longer period of time.
- Have all referrals to community organizations for services been made or do I need to make the referrals? Services may include home care, therapy, home health or hospice care.
- Can I have all the contact information for the referrals that have been made or need to be made, including the contact person's name?
- Are all accommodations and equipment available and in good working order?
- Can you show me how to operate the equipment and/or how to perform specific care, such as bathing or feeding?
- Is my loved one on a special diet, such as a puréed diet, and if so for how long?
- Are there additional referrals for home care options, such as Meals on Wheels, personal emergency response system and transportation?

Following this meeting, document all communication and make sure you fully understand what's needed for providing quality care at home. Follow up with the patient's primary care physician to ensure they are aware of the discharge date, any changes in medications or treatments and follow-up appointments. In addition, make sure your or your loved one's advance care directives are completed and all caregivers are knowledgeable of their location.



Home care vs. Home health care

Home care is provided by professional caregivers and helps with day-to-day activities and tasks. Services include (but are not limited to) personal care, help with transportation, meal preparation and companionship services.

Home health care provides professional medical assistance by licensed medical professionals (i.e. LPN, RN) and requires a doctor's prescription. It is typically for a short duration.

HOME CARE NEEDS CHECKLIST

Home care is provided by professional caregivers and helps with non-medical day-to-day activities and tasks. Services include personal care, help with transportation, meal preparation and companionship services. Check all of the activities below that your loved one needs assistance with. This will help determine their care plan.



COMPANIONSHIP SERVICES

- Arrange appointments
- Running errands/ transportation
- Medication reminders
- Assist with morning routine
- Assist with bedtime
- Accompany to doctor
- Prepare meals and snacks
- Check for food freshness
- Encourage fluids
- Assist with reading
- Organize mail
- Assist with pet care
- Visit neighbors and friends
- Mail bills and letters
- Play games/cards
- Prescription pick up
- Answer the phone



HOMEMAKER SERVICES

- Kitchen maintenance
- Bathroom maintenance
- Light housekeeping
- Vacuum / sweep / mop
- Empty trash
- Grocery shopping
- Prepare meals & snacks
- Laundry
- Change linens
- Make beds
- Organize closets
- Dry cleaning drop off and pick up



PERSONAL CARE SERVICES

- Bathing / shower assistance
- Assistance walking
- Shampoo hair
- Assist with dressing
- Routine transfer assist
- Personal hygiene
- Assist with light exercise
- Hospital pick up
- Hoyer lift transfer
- Gait belt transfer
- Escort to dialysis
- Incontinence care
- Memory care
- Medication reminders

POST-DISCHARGE HOME SAFETY CHECKLIST

Y N N/A
Y N N/A
Y N N/A

Emergency Procedures

- Do you know how to call for assistance in an emergency?
- Do you have a personal medical alert system?
- Are you prepared with an emergency response kit?

Fire Response

Y N N/A
Y N N/A

- Do you have a home fire safety/drill plan?
- Are exits available from all locations in the house, and are those exits clear from any obstructions?

Do the following areas have smoke detectors?

Y N N/A
Y N N/A

- Hallways
- Kitchen
- Bedrooms
- Attic
- Basement

Is there a carbon monoxide detector?

If anyone has hearing impairments in the home, do the detectors use lights to indicate warning?

Does anyone smoke in the home?

Fire Extinguisher

Y N N/A
Y N N/A
Y N N/A
Y N N/A
Y N N/A

- Do you have a fire extinguisher? Is it current?
- Is the pressure gauge, at the top, in good working order?
- Is your fire extinguisher in a clean, indoor location? (away from direct sunlight and free of dust)
- Is your fire extinguisher free of damage, dents, etc.?
- In the event of a fire, do you know how to operate the fire extinguisher?

Fireplace (if applicable)

Y N N/A
Y N N/A

- Does the fireplace have a smoke screen?
- Is maintenance for the fireplace/wood stove completed regularly?

POST-DISCHARGE HOME SAFETY CHECKLIST

Electric Outlets and Devices

Y	N	N/A	Are outlets used properly, avoiding multiple plugs and extension cords?
Y	N	N/A	Are electric cords free from fraying or cracking?
Y	N	N/A	Do electric plugs fit snugly into their sockets?
Y	N	N/A	Do electric cords run along walls and not across rooms?
Y	N	N/A	Does the electrical system meet the power requirement for special medical equipment, such as ventilators and oxygen concentrators?

Floors

Y	N	N/A	Is non-skid wax used on floors?
Y	N	N/A	Are scatter rugs secured at the edges?
Y	N	N/A	Are pathways and hallways clear of excess furniture and clutter?

Stairwells (if applicable)

Y	N	N/A	Are there non-skid treads on stairs?
Y	N	N/A	Is there a clear pathway on stairs?
Y	N	N/A	Is there adequate lighting for the stairwell?
Y	N	N/A	Are handrails present and securely fastened?

Lighting

Y	N	N/A	Is lighting adequate throughout the house?
Y	N	N/A	Are burnt-out light bulbs replaced?
Y	N	N/A	Are nightlights used along routes/areas traveled after dark?
Y	N	N/A	Are light switches easily visible and within reach? (glow in the dark tape on the switch is a good option)

POST-DISCHARGE HOME SAFETY CHECKLIST

Bathroom

Are the following items installed properly and utilized as needed?

Y	N	N/A	Grab bars (near tub, shower, toilet)
Y	N	N/A	Elevated toilet seat
Y	N	N/A	Shower chair
Y	N	N/A	Is there a non-skid mat in the tub/shower?
Y	N	N/A	Is there a seat by the sink?
Y	N	N/A	Is the bathroom easily accessible in the home?

Bedroom

Are the following items installed properly and utilized as needed?

Y	N	N/A	Hospital bed/ trapeze
Y	N	N/A	Lift system
Y	N	N/A	Bedside commode
Y	N	N/A	Is there a telephone within easy reach?
Y	N	N/A	Is there a seat by the sink?
Y	N	N/A	Is there a flashlight, with extra batteries, near the bed?

Kitchen

Y	N	N/A	Are the fridge and cupboards inventoried to ensure expired foods are removed?
Y	N	N/A	Are cabinets easily and safely accessible?
Y	N	N/A	Are adaptive devices required? (e.g. extended graspers or eating devices)
Y	N	N/A	Are all medicines secured and properly stored?

Home Environment

Y	N	N/A	Are the following items out of reach of confused adults? (medications, dangerous tools/equipment, cleaning substances, poisons such as bug/weed killer)
Y	N	N/A	Is snow and ice removal adequate and efficient?
Y	N	N/A	Are sidewalks, curbs and outside stairs maintained?
Y	N	N/A	Is there a ramp for mobility/wheel-chair accessibility?
Y	N	N/A	Is the water heater temperature kept below 110 degrees Fahrenheit?

Home Environment (continued)

- Y N N/A Are all doors and screens maintained and in proper working condition (to ensure easy opening)?
- Y N N/A Are the furniture and any safety equipment being maintained and in proper working condition?

Medical Equipment Management (if applicable)

- Y N N/A Are you aware of proper operation for medical equipment?
- Y N N/A Are you aware of proper storage and cleaning of the equipment?
- Y N N/A Do you understand equipment hazards and how to avoid them?
- Y N N/A Do you know who to contact if the equipment malfunctions?

Oxygen Safety

- Y N N/A Have you been educated on oxygen safety?
- Y N N/A If oxygen is being used, is a "No Smoking" sign posted?
- Y N N/A Are oxygen cylinders being stored properly?
- Y N N/A Are oxygen tanks and hoses out of the way, to reduce tripping hazards?
- Y N N/A Are tanks and hoses away from open flame, heat, etc.?
(Recommended 9 feet away)

COVID-19 Precautions

- Y N N/A Have you been educated on best practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19?
- Y N N/A Do you have PPE in the home, including masks, gloves, hand sanitizer and wipes?
- Y N N/A Is social distancing practiced (when possible)?
- Y N N/A Are you monitoring your temperature daily?
- Y N N/A Are you using CDC guidelines for out-of-state travel and daily outings?



TURN TO
SYNERGY
HomeCare for
compassionate
transitional care

Most older adults want to recover at home, and having a good support system in place can help make that possible. An in-home personal caregiver can help ensure a safe transition home and provide support for family caregivers.

From a few hours a day to around-the-clock care, SYNERGY HomeCare's ConciergeCare program provides personalized transitional care focused on safety, healing and recovery. SYNERGY HomeCare can assist you or your loved one as early as pre-discharge, and care can range from a few days to an entire month. We make your home the most comfortable environment for recovery while anticipating your needs as you go through your healing journey.

We can design a personal transitional care plan for you or your loved one.

Call us. We listen.
877-432-2692

SYNERGYHomeCare.com



OUR CONCIERGE CARE SERVICES:

- Personal assistance with bathing, dressing and grooming
- Medication reminders
- Companion care
- Light housekeeping
- Meal planning and preparation
- Healthy meal delivery
- Grocery shopping and fridge clean-out
- Prescription pickup
- Transportation support to and from medical appointments
- Assistance with mobility around the home
- Care coordination and planning with other care providers
- Family outreach updates and video conferencing
- Fall prevention assessment
- Pet care (where available)
- Access to remote monitoring solutions*
- Access to medication dispenser*

* Available for an additional fee



Contact us for cost information, a customized care plan and a no-obligation home assessment.

877-432-2692

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