



# Discharge Planning Toolkit

For Veterans and Their Families/Caregivers

## Intended Recipients

The intended recipients of the “Discharge Planning Toolkit” are Veterans and their families/caregivers who are planning to receive inpatient services in the community via the Department of Veterans Affairs’ (VA) Community Care Network (CCN) program with TriWest Healthcare Alliance.

## A Special Thanks To Our Veterans

TriWest’s mission is to serve America’s Veterans. It is an honor and a privilege to serve those who have served our country. We believe our Veterans deserve nothing less than the best health care possible.

We created this toolkit to support our Veterans and their families/caregivers to ensure a timely and smooth transition to home or the next level of care. The use of this toolkit is not meant to replace any instructions given by your doctor or other health care providers. The information provided in this toolkit includes general information that is typically needed after a patient is discharged from the hospital and supports use of VA-specific resources or processes.

# Table of Contents

- What is Discharge Planning? . . . . . 3**
  
- Questionnaire . . . . . 4**
  - Questions To Ask Yourself Before You Are Admitted To The Hospital. . . . .4
  - Questions To Ask Your Doctor Before You Are Admitted To The Hospital . . . . . 4
  - Questions To Ask Before You Are Discharged From The Hospital . . . . . .5
  
- Discharge Instructions . . . . . 6**
  - Medications . . . . . .6
  - Food . . . . . .6
  - Follow-up Appointments . . . . . .7
  
- Community Resources . . . . . 7**
  
- Veteran Resources . . . . . 7**
  - VA Telephone Numbers . . . . . .7
  - Websites . . . . . .7
  
- My Medications . . . . . 8**
  
- My Appointments . . . . . 9**
  
- My Goals . . . . . 9**
  
- Additional Notes . . . . . 9**

## What is Discharge Planning?

Discharge planning begins before admission to a hospital, preparing a Veteran to leave the hospital with the necessary services and support for recovery (e.g. oxygen, wheelchair, home health nurse, medications and appointments). The Veteran and family/caregiver will be directly involved in planning any care or follow-up that is needed for discharge from the hospital.

Almost 20% of patients may have an issue regarding their medical care within 30 days after discharge. Research shows that most of these issues could have been prevented. Common discharge problems can be prevented if you:

1. Plan for what returning home will be like and what help will be needed before you leave a hospital.
2. Have a written list of medications with you when you go in the hospital and have a new list of what is to be started, stopped or continued when you leave. If you think it may be difficult to get your medications on the way home from the hospital, plan ahead for a prescription to be sent the day before leaving so any problems the pharmacy may have can be resolved before you leave.
3. Have a written description from the hospital of what physical symptoms to watch out for and when to call your doctor versus when to go to the emergency room right away.
4. Have a written document with all tests scheduled for follow up from the hospital and make sure you plan a reminder to yourself as well as reliable transportation to get there on time. Know if you need to change any medications or avoid eating for these tests.
5. Have a written document with all appointments scheduled for follow up from the hospital and make sure you plan a reminder to yourself as well as reliable transportation to get there on time.



## Questionnaire

What questions should you ask before and during your hospital stay to make sure you have the support needed when you discharge from the hospital? Use the space provided after each question to take any notes.

### Questions To Ask Yourself Before You Are Admitted To The Hospital

1. Do I have someone to assist with my care after I am discharged from the hospital?  
Yes No
  - a. If yes, who will assist me? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Does my caretaker need to request time off of work? Yes No
  - c. Will they need a note? Yes No
  - d. Does my caretaker have health issues or physical restrictions that may limit their help? Yes No
2. Is my home environment safe for me? Yes No
  - a. Are there stairs/steps that will prevent me from getting where I need to go in my home? Yes No
  - b. Do I need a ramp to get into my home? Yes No
  - c. Are there any rugs that I may slip on and cause me to fall? Yes No
  - d. Do I need special bathtub/shower or toilet equipment? Yes No
3. Do I need to make arrangements for anyone else (e.g. children, spouse, pets or parents) that depends on me for help? Yes No
4. Do I have transportation to and from the hospital? Yes No
5. Do I have a list of my medications, creams, eye or ear drops, herbal supplements and vitamins to bring with me to the hospital? Yes No
  - a. You can use the "Medication List" in this document to help you list your medications
  - b. Bring a list of known allergies and all of your current doctors' names and phone numbers
6. Do I need to avoid eating or drinking before I am admitted to the hospital? Yes No

### Questions To Ask Your Doctor Before You Are Admitted To The Hospital

1. What am I being admitted to the hospital for and what should I expect? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How long will I be there? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Where will I receive care after I am discharged from the hospital and what type of support will I need (e.g. caregiver, home health, medical equipment, wound care, skilled nursing facility or inpatient rehab facility)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How long will it take me to recover and how long will I need to be off work or limited in activity after I am discharged from the hospital? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Do I need a note for my work? Yes No
6. Are there medications I should stop taking before I am admitted to the hospital (Ibuprophen, Aspirin, Warfarin for example)? Yes No  
Medications to stop taking: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Do I need to limit any food or beverages prior to admission? Yes No  
Limit: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Do I need to have any lab work, x-rays or see any other doctors before I am admitted?  
Yes No

## Questions To Ask Before You Are Discharged From The Hospital

1. What signs and symptoms do I need to look for and what do I need to do if they occur?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
a. Who should I contact if these signs or symptoms occur? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What changes to my food or drink do I need to make? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Will I need to make changes to my activities? Yes No
- a. What activities should I avoid and for how long (e.g., driving, lifting heavy objects)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- b. What activities will I need help with and for how long (e.g., bathing, walking, climbing stairs, house cleaning, cooking and/or paying bills)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- c. What activities should I do? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What type of support will I need if I am discharged to my home? ***TriWest can work with your VA Medical Center to provide what is needed at home.*** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- a. Do I need any medical equipment at home? Yes No
- b. Do I need a home health nurse or outpatient therapy? Yes No
- c. Does my caregiver need to be taught how to help with my care? Yes No
- Dressing changes
  - Injections or infusions
  - Using special equipment
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Are there any other resources that I will need? Yes No
- Meals on Wheels, grocery delivery
  - Help with stress
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
5. What do I need to know about my medications? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- a. Use the My Medication reconciliation sheet (on page 8) using your own words to fill it out as the nurse explains your medications to you so you can understand clearly what to do when you get home.
- b. What should I do with medications I no longer take? How do I dispose of them?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. How should I manage my pain? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Will I need to go to a rehab or skilled nursing facility? Yes No

8. What appointments and tests do I need scheduled to check on me after discharge?
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- a. See “My Appointment” tracking form to help keep track of your appointments.  
b. If I am not supposed to drive or I do not have a vehicle, do I have transportation to get to my appointments? Yes No
9. Is anything confusing or unclear in the written discharge instructions given to me before I leave the hospital? Yes No      Can I read it clearly? Yes No
10. Who can I call with questions when I’m home? \_\_\_\_\_
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## Discharge Instructions

### Medications

All medications prescribed for you must be obtained from a VA pharmacy unless your provider has identified an urgent need for you to start taking a medication immediately and there is no time to get your medications from VA. It may help to have any new prescriptions needed at discharge faxed to the VA Medical Center the day before you are planning to discharge. If the prescriptions have an instruction on them that it is needed for discharge from the hospital with the anticipated date of discharge and request for overnight delivery then you may be able to get them at your home more easily.

If you need to obtain a prescription medication from a community pharmacy, you can be given a prescription for up to a 14-day supply of the medication, without a refill. You will need to pay at the community pharmacy and submit the receipt to your VA to be reimbursed. Overnight mail of these medications when needed urgently may avoid you incurring this cost, so discuss with your provider what would be best for you.

If the provider wants you to continue taking the medication more than 14 days, you can be given a second prescription that you will need to have filled at your VA pharmacy by having your provider fax it to the VA Medical Center or by you taking it to the pharmacy window.

### Food

The right food is essential for a body to heal or recover from illness. It is very important that you understand any changes you might have to make after discharge, make those changes in your meal planning and continue to eat the best food while you recover. If you or your family/caregiver needs assistance with your diet and food planning or you are experiencing problems eating, call your community provider or discharge planner.

## Follow-up Appointments

Before you leave the hospital you will be asked to follow up with your providers and/or schedule other medical appointments. It is important for you to keep your appointment because the doctor needs to determine how well you are recovering from your illness so adjustments can be made to your care plan and goals.

We find it is much faster if you make your follow-up appointments before your discharge and let the doctor's office know you are calling from the hospital.

## Community Resources

Sometimes you need additional resources to support your health care needs. The link below will give you access to the National Resource Directory that provides a listing of resources in your state, including transportation and family/caregiver support.

<https://www.nrd.gov/>

## Veteran Resources

### VA Telephone Numbers

- Veteran Crisis Line (Available 24/7): 1-800-273-8255
- Caregiver Support Line: 1-855-260-3274
- VA Benefit Information: 1-800-827-1000

## Websites

Please visit VA's website at <https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp> to find your VA Medical Center's phone number, pharmacy fax number and other contact information.

Please visit TriWest's provider website at <https://www.triwest.com/provider> to find more information on processes, pharmacy resources and fax numbers, and other information.



# My Medications

Medication Name	Pick one of these for each medication: <b>NEW</b> <b>STOP</b> <b>CHANGE</b> <b>NO CHANGE</b>	Why do I need this medication?	What dose (mg) and how often do I take it?	Take with or without food, antacids, grapefruit juice?	Side effect to watch our for?



## My Appointments

With Who?	For What?	Address	Phone Number	Date & Time

## My Goals

Goal	Steps	Family/Caregiver Assisting	Start Date	Finish Date

## Additional Notes

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