Hospital Discharge Checklist for an Aging Parent

What to settle before you leave the room - and what to have ready at home

If time is short, start here: ask the team to walk you through the final medication list, confirm which follow-up appointments are needed and whether they are already booked, and write down who to call with questions after you leave. Then continue through the rest of this checklist before discharge as time allows.

Before you leave the room

Ask to be included in discharge planning and ask for written discharge instructions before you leave.

- ☐ What changed during this stay, in plain language?
- ☐ What did the team tell us to watch for at home?
- ☐ Who do we call during office hours?
- ☐ Who do we call after hours?
- ☐ What activity is expected or limited, and for how long?
- ☐ Is help at home being arranged, and by whom?
- ☐ Has any home health or other referral been accepted?
- ☐ May we have the discharge instructions in writing before we go?

Notes from the discharge team

Medication changes

Have the discharge team or pharmacist walk through the final medication list.

- [ ] Which medicines from before the hospital are being stopped?
- [ ] Which medicines are continuing at a different strength or dose?
- [ ] Which medicines are new?
- [ ] Are any names unclear or possibly the same medicine under different names?
- [ ] Should any over-the-counter medicines, vitamins or supplements be paused?
- [ ] What medicine was already given today?
- [ ] When is the next dose due according to the discharge instructions?
- [ ] Which pharmacy has the new prescriptions, and are they ready?

Medication questions to clarify before leaving

Follow-up appointments

'Follow up in a week' is not an appointment until someone owns the next step.

Follow-up / Provider	Date / Time	Who arranges / transport

Equipment & supplies

Confirm what is needed and who is responsible for getting it.

- [ ] What equipment is needed at home?
- [ ] Is it being delivered or collected?
- [ ] Who is responsible for arranging it?
- [ ] Will it arrive before your parent gets home?
- [ ] Has someone shown the family how to use it?
- [ ] What supplies will run out and who reorders them?
- [ ] What supplier/contact number should the family keep?

Equipment / supplier notes

Is the house actually ready?

If possible, have someone walk through the home before your parent arrives.

- [ ] Path from car to door is passable.
- [ ] Bathroom is reachable from the sleeping area.
- [ ] Sleeping location is realistic for current mobility.
- [ ] Rugs, cords and low furniture are moved from key paths.
- [ ] Lights work on the route used at night.
- [ ] Phone is within reach of the bed/chair.
- [ ] Food and basic household items are available for the first day.
- [ ] Pets, mail, temperature and other home basics are handled.

Warning signs & who to call

Record what your own discharge team tells you - do not rely on a generic list.

Specific things the team told us to watch for

Contact	Name / Organization	Phone

In an emergency, contact emergency services. This checklist is for planning and organization, not for deciding whether something is an emergency.

Who is doing what

Put a name and time beside each job before everyone leaves the hospital.

Task	Person	When

What to take with you

Do one last sweep before leaving the floor.

- [ ] Written discharge instructions
- [ ] Current medication list
- [ ] Any paper prescriptions not sent electronically
- [ ] Follow-up provider contact details
- [ ] Equipment / supplier paperwork
- [ ] Home health or other service contact information, if arranged
- [ ] Glasses
- [ ] Hearing aids
- [ ] Dentures
- [ ] Phone and charger
- [ ] Clothing / shoes
- [ ] Valuables or items stored by the hospital

Getting home

Confirm the actual trip home, not just the discharge time.

- [ ] Who is driving?
- [ ] Is the vehicle suitable for getting in and out?
- [ ] Is medical transport needed?
- [ ] Who is arranging transport and who pays?
- [ ] Is there a pharmacy or food stop needed on the way?
- [ ] Is someone meeting you at the house?

Getting-home notes

First few days & family handoff

Before everyone scatters, make sure another person can understand the plan.

- ☐ Discharge instructions have one permanent place.
- ☐ Current medication list is easy to find.
- ☐ Follow-up appointments are scheduled or assigned to someone.
- ☐ Equipment/supply tasks have an owner.
- ☐ The family knows who to call with questions.
- ☐ The caregiver knows what the discharge team said to watch for.
- ☐ Open tasks have a named person responsible.

Remaining responsibilities

Task	Person	Due / Status

Additional notes

Important: This checklist is an organizing tool for families. It is educational only and is not medical advice, and it does not replace the discharge instructions your care team gives you. Follow the individualized instructions provided by your parent's healthcare professionals. In an emergency, contact emergency services.

Developed using: Medicare discharge-planning guidance, CMS discharge-planning requirements, AHRQ care-transition materials, and United Hospital Fund / Next Step in Care resources.

Designed with care. Built for Clarity.