



## 10 Ways You Can Take a More Active Role as a Hospital Patient

08/19/2008 (Tacoma, Wash.) -- In our changing world of medicine, patients are encouraged to learn about their diagnosis, ask questions and take an active role in their healthcare. Our doctors at Sound Inpatient Physicians (Sound), who have over 100,000 patient encounters a year, embrace their role as educators. As experts in the field of hospital medicine, our hospitalists (hospital-based physicians) have created a list of 10 ways to improve your inpatient experience and contribute to your rapid recovery and timely discharge.

1. Learn about your illness. A lack of knowledge can increase anxiety and lead to feelings of helplessness. Ask your physician to write down your diagnosis and list your medications (if necessary) and provide you with an educational brochure, or recommend a website. Don't hesitate to take notes. Some people even keep a health journal with dated entries.
2. Introduce yourself to new caregivers and staff. The hospital is a complex environment with many people working multiple shifts. Don't hesitate to ask caregivers and ancillary hospital staff to identify themselves and show their hospital identification badge. Every employee is required to wear one.
3. Write down your questions and concerns as you think of them. You want to be sure all of your questions and concerns are addressed when you have the full attention of your doctor. Unanswered questions can increase your anxiety about the unknown and often lead to unnecessary worry. Involving your doctor in the conversation will empower you to better cope with your hospital experience. Keeping a daily health journal while you are hospitalized can help you organize your thoughts, questions and other information.
4. Ask your physician about the plan for the day. Knowing what to expect throughout your day can help reduce your stress and offer you insight into your care. It gives you an opportunity to ask further questions you may have. Be sure to let your doctor or nurse know if you have any concerns.
5. Ask a trusted family member or friend to be your health advocate. Decision making may be difficult or impractical due to medications or the severity of your condition when you are hospitalized. An advocate can provide comfort and support. If necessary, consider obtaining legal counsel to set up documents that allow another to act on your behalf should you be unable.
6. Participate in the decisions about your treatment as much as possible. If you understand your illness and have your questions answered, you will feel more empowered to discuss your tests and treatment plan. Make sure you and your advocate understand the plan for your treatment.
7. Sleep as much as possible. Rest is of vital importance on the road to recovery. Ironically, getting a good night's sleep in a hospital sometimes can be difficult. Therefore, regardless of the hour, take the opportunity to catnap or rest whenever possible.
8. Participate in your recovery. There are parts of your treatment plan over which you have complete control, such as sitting up and trying to walk. It is essential to follow the plan given by your caretakers. It will speed your recovery process, give your physician vital insight into your condition and contribute to a timely discharge. The recovery and rehab phase is not the most glamorous time in your life. But focusing on your recovery will contribute greatly to your quality of life.
9. Tell your family and friends when to visit. If they have questions or concerns, the best time to visit is between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. The day staff - those most familiar with your care - is usually still on duty. Of course, we encourage you to invite a friendly face to brighten your day anytime during the hospital's posted visiting hours.
10. Follow your discharge orders regarding medications, treatments and appointments. The road to health as a continuum cannot be emphasized enough. Your hospitalist, or hospital-based physician, discharges you with the assumption you will be evaluated by your personal physician or specialist soon after discharge as well as receive specific medications. The hospitalist's duty is to make you well enough to receive outpatient care. Your discharge simply means you no longer require the level of care the hospital provides. Simply put, full compliance with your doctor's orders is vital to your full recovery. It is your responsibility to follow your discharge instructions so as to ensure your continued improvement.



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