

Now You Are Home

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This guide has information to help you when you are back at home after your hospital stay.



Acknowledgements

The Health Care Consumers' Association of the ACT (HCCA) acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land our organisation is located on and where we work, the Ngunnawal people. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region. We pay our respects to their ancestors and elders, past, present and emerging.

HCCA thanks all those who contributed to this adaptation of the Western Australian Department of Health *Patient First* resources for use as the *Staying Safe* resources in the Australian Capital Territory.

About HCCA

The **Health Care Consumers' Association (HCCA)** is a health promotion agency and the peak consumer advocacy organisation in the Canberra region. HCCA provides a voice for consumers on local health issues and provides opportunities for health care consumers to participate in all levels of health service planning, policy development and decision making.

HCCA involves consumers through:

- consumer representation and consumer and community consultations
- training in health rights and navigating the health system
- health literacy education and resources
- community forums and information sessions about health services
- research into consumer experience of human services.

For more information contact HCCA at www.hcca.org.au, on 02 6230 7800, or by email at adminofficer@hcca.org.au

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Now you are home

This guide has information to help you when you are back at home after your hospital stay.

1. Looking after your health

Follow the instructions given to you by the hospital, for example about wound care, your medications and any exercises staff told you to do.

Contact your GP as soon as possible if you have any concerns about your health or if you need to get a prescription for a new medication you started in hospital.

Keep a copy of your discharge summary so that you can refer to it and make sure you know what to do to manage your health at home.

Make an appointment to see your GP within a week of going home, even if you are feeling well.



2. Help at home

Sometimes a little bit of help can make coping at home easier. Here are some ideas that can make the first few days or weeks at home after a hospital stay easier.



Have you let your neighbours know you are home?

They may be able to help with things like putting your bins out or bringing them in again, emptying your mailbox, bringing the paper in or dog walking.



Do your friends and family know you are home?

Visitors can lift your mood and help with small tasks around the house. You can catch up via a video call or telephone call if you are not up to visitors.



Do you need help with household tasks, shopping or preparing healthy meals?

Family and friends are often happy to help by providing meals or dropping off groceries.

There are also services that can help with this, either short or long term. You may need to wait until services can be arranged.

You can contact the Seniors Information Service provided by COTA ACT on 02 6282 3777 for information about services.

If you are under 65 you may be able to get help through the ACT Government Community Assistance and Support Program (CASP).

You can find out more about CASP on the ACT Health website at: <https://www.health.act.gov.au/services-and-programs/act-community-assistance-support-program-casp>



Do you need help looking after your pets?

Pets are important for wellbeing and mental health, but you might have some problems looking after them. Could your pet stay with friends or family for a couple of weeks? Could a neighbour's child clean the bird cage for you, or take the dog for a walk for some pocket money?



Do you need help getting to appointments?

How will you get to and from appointments? Can a friend or family member take you? Can you organise Community Transport? Are you eligible for subsidised taxi travel?

You can find out more from COTA ACT on the Getting Around page of their website: <https://www.cotaact.org.au/information/gettingaround/>



3. Preventing falls at home

If you have had a fall, speak to your GP so you can take steps to reduce your risk of falling again.

If you have a fall at home, you can call an ambulance if you can't get up or your carer can't help you up. They can help and will check that you haven't injured anything. **You do not have to go to hospital after calling an ambulance.**

There are simple steps you can take to prevent slips, trips, and falls:



Take care of your health. Make sure you eat and drink well and take your medication as recommended.

- **Avoid dehydration.** Make sure you drink regularly, even if you aren't thirsty. Dehydration can affect your balance.
- **Make sure you are eating enough.** Your body needs lots of energy and nutrients to heal and be well. Low blood sugar or constipation can stop you thinking clearly.
- **Notice how medication affects you.** If your medication makes you drowsy, dizzy, weak, confused, or affects your balance, tell your doctor so they can make any changes needed.
- **Check your eyesight.** Have your eyes tested regularly and make sure you keep your glasses somewhere easy to reach.



Move your body. Moving will improve your balance, strengthen your muscles and bones, and improve your overall fitness and wellbeing.

- **Build your balance.** Improving your balance is an important way to prevent a fall.
- **Strengthen your legs.** Strong bones and muscles in your legs will help keep you flexible and mobile.
- **Use a mobility aid, such as a walking stick or walking frame - if one has been recommended.** You will need to build your strength, balance and mobility up slowly.



Remove hazards. Keeping your home free from hazards will reduce your risk of a fall.

- **Make your home safer.** Remove slip and trip hazards like rugs, power cords, and small pieces of furniture. Make sure areas are well lit. Consider home modifications if you might need them like ramps or handrails.
- **Home maintenance.** Fix any uneven surfaces, such as broken paths, wobbly pavers or rotten boards in decks or stairs.
- **Wear safe footwear.** Wear flat, securely fitting shoes with good grip.



4. Be medicine-wise at home

Keep a list of all the medicines you take, including over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal medicines. Keep it up to date. Make sure it is easy to find in an emergency and that your family and carers know where it is.

- Keep medicines out of reach of children and pets.
- Ask your pharmacist to dispose of your unused or out-of-date medicines.
- Ask your pharmacist for a list of your regular medicines. If you have trouble remembering to take your medicines, speak to your local pharmacist for ways they can help (for example using a Webster-pak®).
- Use an app to manage your medicine list. Your pharmacy may recommend an app that you can use to see and manage your prescriptions.



5. Support

It is common to feel sad or down and find it difficult to cope after serious illness or major surgery. You may find it helpful to discuss this with your GP or talk to someone about how you are feeling, like a friend, health professional or patient support group.

SHOUT (Self Help Organisations United Together) is a Canberra-based organisation that can help you connect with a support group or organisation. SHOUT has an online directory that is an easy way to find self help and support groups, community groups and organisations. You can find the directory on their website at: <https://www.shout.org.au/>. You can also contact them for more information on 02 6290 1984 or admin@shout.org.au.

6. Support for carers

When you are home from hospital, your carer may require extra help. For more information call Carers ACT on 02 6296 9900 during standard office hours.

Carer Gateway and Emergency Respite: Call 1800 422 737 for your local Carer Gateway service. If you are calling from the ACT, select Option 1 and you will be transferred to Carers ACT.

You can call this number 24 hours a day to arrange emergency respite.

7. Good resources

Choosing Wisely Australia

www.choosingwisely.org.au

Advice about questions to ask to your doctor or healthcare provider.

Falls and Falls Injury Prevention Program

ACT Community Health Centres offer a falls prevention program for people aged 65 years and over, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 55 years and over. The services include:

- Prevention and early intervention
- Providing individual advice and information
- Stepping On (a community-based program for clients over 70 years)

Contact the Community Health Centres on (02) 5124 9977 for more information.

Head to Health

<https://headtohealth.gov.au/supporting-yourself/support-for/carers>

Whether you are trying to improve your own sense of wellbeing, looking for help with something that is bothering you, or your carer needs some support, Head to Health is a good place to start.

The Head to Health website can help you find Australian mental health and wellbeing resources, for yourself or for someone you care about. It brings together apps, online programs, online forums, phone services, and a range of digital information resources. It is run by the Australian Department of Health.

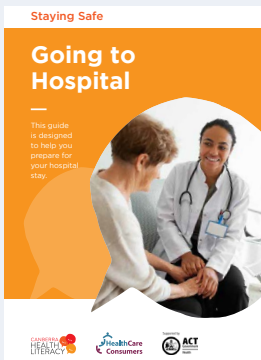
NPS MedicineWise

www.nps.org.au/topics/how-to-be-medicinewise/managing-your-medicines/medicines-list/medicinelist-smartphone-app

A smartphone app to keep an up-to-date list of all your medications.

Staying Safe booklets

This booklet is the third in a series called Staying Safe. The other booklets in this series are **Staying Safe – Going to Hospital** and **Staying Safe – In Hospital**. Read the other booklets online at www.hcca.org.au or contact HCCA on 02 6230 7800 or adminofficer@hcca.org.au.



**Staying Safe
– Going to Hospital**



**Staying Safe
– In Hospital**

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This publication is adapted from Patient First resources with permission from the West Australian Department of Health. The original Patient First material can be found at https://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/F_I/Going-to-hospital.

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Adaptations made by HCCA have been guided by the input of health care consumers in the ACT and include information specific to the ACT health system.

This publication is provided for information purposes only. It does not constitute medical advice. All users should seek advice from a qualified health care professional for advice relevant to their unique circumstances.

