

Staying Safe In Hospital

Your all-in-one guide to getting ready for a hospital stay, safety in hospital & recovering well at home.



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. 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.

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About HCCA

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

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



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1. Before you go to hospital

Your rights and responsibilities

You have the right to health care that is:

Respectful

Responsive

Safe

High
quality

Tailored to
YOUR
needs

Healthcare staff have a responsibility to:

- treat you respectfully
- listen to your concerns
- answer your questions clearly and honestly
- inform and educate you about your condition and your symptoms.

You have the right to clear, easy-to-understand information so you and your supporters:

- understand what is happening
- can make choices about what is right for you

This includes information in your preferred language about:

- your health conditions
- possible benefits and risks of different tests, treatments and procedures
- possible side effects of any medication or procedures
- what you can do to get the best health outcomes
- how long it will take you to recover

You have a responsibility to treat hospital staff and other patients with respect.

Sharing information

Sharing information about your health will help staff give you the best care possible.

Respect and good communication between staff, patients and carers is important. It will help you have a positive hospital experience and better health outcomes.

You will be asked about:

- you and your family's medical history
- any medicines you are taking
- any bad reactions you may have had to a medicine
- any other allergies like foods or things in your environment
- any recent changes to your health
- your dietary needs
- your religious and cultural needs
- your communication or language needs
- your access needs, like help to move around or sensory needs

If you don't feel safe or comfortable sharing all this information, you can choose how much you want to share.

Tell the staff if you can't understand the information they give you. Let them know if you need:



an interpreter
or translated
information



support for
your hearing
or speech



braille, large
print or easy
read documents



a social
worker or
liaison officer

Let staff know if you are:

- an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person
- a person with disability, including invisible disability
- a veteran or family of a veteran

They may connect you with a support person or Liaison Officer who can support you during your stay and to get home safely.

Informed consent

Your treatment is your choice.

Before you say yes or no, make sure you know about your options. This will help you make the right decision for you. You can only make an informed decision if you fully understand:

- your condition
- what treatments can help you
- benefits and risks of the treatment, medicines, or operation.

You should speak up if you don't understand. If you do not feel safe to speak up, ask to speak to a family member, friend, support person or a liaison officer.

Staff WANT you to ask questions. They are there to share information and answer your questions

Your doctor can give you advice about treatment options, but only you know:

- what your lifestyle is like
- your work and family demands
- your personal needs.

If you are not sure, discuss your options with a friend or family member. You also have the right to ask for a second opinion from another doctor or specialist.

Ask your doctor or other health professional these questions to help you decide:

- Do I really need this test or procedure?
- What are the risks?
- Are there simpler, safer options?
- What happens if I don't do anything?
- What are the costs?

Questions from www.choosingwisely.org.au

The final decision is yours. When you are happy that you understand and agree to what is going to happen you can give your consent (your “yes”). You may need to sign a consent form.

Advance Care Planning

You can choose someone you trust to speak on your behalf in case you are not well enough to do so.

To make your plan, you need to think about things like:

- who would make choices for you,
- what health care workers need to know about your health,
- what quality of life is acceptable for you, and
- any life-prolonging treatments you do or do not want.

You can then record your choices using some forms. You should share your plan with any family, carers, or friends who will be involved in making decisions if you can't speak for yourself.

Ask any hospital or health service you see to keep a copy of your plan on your health record. You can upload your plan to the ACT Digital Health Record using MyDHR, and to your national My Health Record if you have one.

For help, contact Canberra Health Services' Advance Care Planning team on **02 5124 9274** or email acp@act.gov.au. You can find resources and forms at hcca.org.au/advance-care-planning.

If you have a mental health condition...

You can use the My Rights, My Decisions toolkit and forms to put in place legally recognised decisions about your mental health treatment and support. Learn more and get the toolkit from the **ACT Mental Health Consumer Network** at: actmhcn.org.au/my-rights-my-decisions-for-consumers/





Family and carer involvement

Family members or friends who provide you with ongoing support may be referred to as your *carer*.

They know you well and may notice things that are important to tell staff. Even if you don't have a carer, it is a good idea to have someone visit you to make sure you are OK.

They may not be able to make decisions for you unless you have said they can in your Advance Care Plan - you can still ask for your carer, family, or trusted friend to be involved in your care.

Staff should ask you before they share information with your carers or supporters.

There is help available for carers. Ask to speak to the hospital social worker or check the **Contact Directory**.

Training and research

Sometimes trainees, students, or researchers may be part of your care. This is important to build and improve the health system.

There could be student nurses, doctors, physiotherapists, dietitians, or other allied health trainees caring for you. Students will be supervised by experienced, qualified staff. **Staff should explain who the students are and ask if it is OK for them to be part of your care.**

You could also be asked to take part in clinical trials or medical research into new treatments or types of care.

You can say no to being part of the training of healthcare staff, clinical trials or medical research.

Your health record and privacy

Your health record tells the story of your health care. Every time you visit a doctor or hospital, a record of your visit is created.

These records can be accessed quickly in an emergency and by other doctors and hospitals if needed. The record keeps track of any conditions you may have, and any treatments and care you have had. **Your health records must be kept confidential.**

You have a right to:

- know what has been written in your record
- request access to the information
- request that mistakes in the record are noted as mistakes.

Your health records in ACT public hospitals are stored in the **Digital Health Record**. You can see things like your contact information, test results, appointments and discharge summaries on the **MyDHR** website (www.mydhr.act.gov.au) or app. If you need to see your full health record, contact Health Information Services at CHS.HIS@act.gov.au or call **02 5124 2124**.

If a record is created by a private hospital, you will need to contact them. You may need to pay a fee to copy or transfer your record.

Some health records are saved in the national **My Health Record** system, such as vaccinations, prescriptions, tests and scans. You can log in to My Health Record through MyGov at my.gov.au or use the **1800 MEDICARE** app.

In some cases a health service can refuse access to your health record, but they must explain why. If you have issues accessing your health record you can contact the **ACT Health Services Commissioner** on **02 6205 2222**.



Before your admission

Before being admitted to hospital, you may need to go to a pre-admission clinic or share information with staff online or over the phone.

You can use the templates at the end of this book to write down your key health information for this appointment.

You will be asked to:

- confirm your personal details
- tell them about any access needs you have
- give information about your medical history, including if you have recently been unwell or your symptoms have changed
- do any tests that will help the doctors to treat you

If you go to a pre-admission clinic in person, the staff will tell you if there is any preparation you need to do before you are admitted. For example, you might need to fast (stop eating) or stop a medication. This is a good time to ask questions and find out more about what will happen during your hospital stay.

If you are doing the pre-admission forms online, you can phone your doctor's rooms for information about your treatment and anything you may need to do to prepare.

Many hospitals have a patient guide that will tell you about the facility and their services. You can check their website (links in the **Contact Directory**) or ask at the pre-admission clinic.



What to Bring to Hospital

- ☐ any scans, test results or information relevant to your stay
- ☐ your Medicare card, concession health care card or DVA health care card
- ☐ your private health insurance details
- ☐ completed admission forms
- ☐ things you use every day – such as your glasses, dentures, hearing aids and a mobile phone charger
- ☐ your regular medicines in their original containers
Include over-the-counter medicines, supplements, herbal or complementary medicines, inhalers and eye drops.
- ☐ any mobility aids you use – such as your wheelchair, walking stick or walking frame.
Label it with your name and phone number or ask the staff to put one of your patient identifier stickers on it.
- ☐ any medical equipment you need – such as your CPAP machine or blood glucose monitor.
If you are unsure if you will need it or if the hospital will have one for you to use, check before you go.
- ☐ footwear/slippers with good grip
- ☐ sleepwear, dressing gown and toiletries for overnight stays
- ☐ foam earplugs and an eye mask to help you sleep
- ☐ a warm, comfortable jacket that opens in the front and is easy to get on and off
- ☐ books, magazines, or other items for entertainment.
- ☐ check with the hospital for any specific items you need to bring for your procedure or if you are having a baby.
- ☐
- ☐

Don't bring jewellery, valuables or large amounts of cash.

Other things to do



If you care for someone at home, plan for someone to do that role while you are in hospital. Ask if they can keep helping you in that way when you first return home.



If you have a person that cares for you at home, have them come with you to your hospital admission. Keep them up to date about your care and treatment in hospital. Hospital staff should involve them in decisions about your care and treatment, if you want them to be.



If you smoke or vape, consider giving up or work out how you will stop smoking before your hospital stay. There is a no smoking policy in all hospitals and hospital grounds. You could ask your GP about nicotine patches or gum, including whether they are safe for you to use.



If your home is going to be empty while you are in hospital, you can make it more secure by:

- having someone check your mail or redirecting your mail
- cancelling newspaper deliveries
- organising a lawn mowing service
- setting a timer to turn lights on and off automatically.



Let your neighbours know how long you will be in hospital so they can keep an eye on your home.



Organise some easy, healthy meal options for when you get home, such as:

- freezing meals, milk and bread
- stocking up on non-perishable items in advance
- working out how to have groceries delivered
- using a meal delivery service



Do you need to organise for someone to look after your pets, garden, or houseplants? It can help to have any arrangements continue for a while after you get home in case you need time to get back to your normal routines.

If you think you will need extra help when you get home, it is important to try to organise this before you go to hospital.

You may have to wait for services to be organised. See the **Contact Directory** for services who can help.

Getting there

If possible:



do not drive
yourself



book a taxi or
get a lift from
someone else



get to know the
hospital's parking
& drop off points

If you need to travel outside the ACT for medical treatment, you may be able to get help with travel costs.

The **ACT Interstate Patient Travel Assistance Scheme (IPTAS)** can cover some travel and accommodation costs for ACT residents who have to travel interstate for specialist medical treatment that is not available in the ACT.

Contact them by phone on **02 5124 9082**, email IPTAS@act.gov.au or at: www.canberrahealthservices.act.gov.au/iptas

If you get a Department of Veteran's Affairs (DVA) pension or benefit, you may be able to use the **Repatriation Transport Scheme**. You should check this with DVA at **1800 550 455** before applying for the ACT IPTAS. You cannot get help from both programs for the same travel costs.



2. When you are in hospital

What you can do to stay safe

Share these tips with family or friends supporting you while you are in hospital so they can help you stay safe.



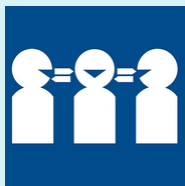
Be involved in your care

During your stay you will be cared for by different people, who will keep each other up to date about your care. Hospital staff may call this “hand over”.

Hand over should happen at your bedside at least once each day so that you know what is happening. You and your carer can ask questions and be involved in plans for your care.

If you or your carer think the information that is being discussed at hand-over is incorrect, **you should speak up and let the staff know.**

If you don't understand what is being said, ask the staff caring for you or the nurse in charge to repeat or explain the information.



If you or your carer need an interpreter, ask hospital staff for one or call the **Translating and Interpreting Service** on **131 450**.

This is a free service for patients.



Ask questions

Asking questions helps you understand what is happening and make the best health care decisions for you. It can also help keep you safe in hospital.

Ask questions and if you or your carer don't understand, ask again.

The staff are responsible for explaining things in a way that makes sense to you. Your questions help them to explain things well. They want you to understand, and you need to let them know if you don't. They are happy to explain things often and in different ways for you.

You can ask them to:

- write it down
- say it again
- explain it simply
- draw a picture for you
- give you information in a language other than English.
- arrange an interpreter
- give you information in an accessible format



Your treatment is your choice

Before saying yes or no to any test or treatment, ask about your options. This helps you make the right decision for you. Tell staff if you don't understand anything about your treatment.

You can only give your informed consent (your “yes”) if you understand:

- your condition
- how a test or treatment can help you
- the benefits and risks of the treatment, medicines, or operation.

If you are not sure, you can ask for more time to make a decision and talk about it with a supportive family member, friend or carer.



Identification: right person, right place, right procedure

Staff will regularly ask you to confirm your personal details. This is to make sure you get the right care, from the right people, in the right place, at the right time.

They want to make sure that they have the right patient for medication, tests or procedures, or if they are moving you to another part of the hospital.



Before starting any medical procedure, medical staff will make a final check to confirm:

- your full name and date of birth
- any allergies or bad reactions you may have to any medicines, food, or other things
- the procedure you are having
- the part of your body where the procedure is being performed
- your consent form is complete, correct and signed by you.

You will be asked the same questions many times. The health care team need to be sure they have everything right and that you know what is happening to you.



Speak up if something isn't right!

Nobody knows your health like you do. You are the best person to notice any changes in your health.

Family, friends, or carers who spend a lot of time with you may see changes in how you look or act before staff notice a change.

You, your carer or visitors should tell staff if you notice:

- changes in how fast you are breathing, tightness if your chest or if it is hard to breathe
- swelling, redness or tenderness, especially in your legs or feet
- feeling unusually hot and clammy
- having more pain than usual or in a new area
- any new symptoms
- feeling confused, anxious, distressed, forgetful or angry
- concerns that you have had different medicines to usual
- feeling dizzy, light-headed, extra drowsy or sleepy
- feeling like you are going to vomit, and
- any other changes that you are worried about.

You or your supporters can use **Call and Respond Early (CARE)** if you are worried about changes in your health, or if you feel you have not been listened to. Follow these steps:

Step 1

Press your buzzer and tell your nurse, midwife or doctor why you are worried.

Step 2

If you are still worried, ask to speak with the nurse or midwife in charge for a review.

Step 3

If you are still worried and feel you need urgent help, call the CARE phone line:

Canberra Hospital, Centenary Hospital for Women and Children or University of Canberra Hospital:

02 5124 3337

North Canberra Hospital:

02 5103 6717

Calvary Bruce Private Hospital:

02 6245 3111

Calvary John James Hospital:

02 6229 2110

NSW Public Hospitals use the Raise It line:

1800 777 333

Prevent falls

Falls can happen easily when you are unwell, taking new medicines, and in unfamiliar places.

Having a fall could cause you serious injury or mean you have to stay in hospital for longer. Healthcare staff will talk to you about your risk of falling and work out ways to help make you safer.

You might need to:

- call staff to assist you to go to the toilet if you need help or are nervous about falling
- have the call bell within reach and use it to call for help
- get to know your hospital room, furniture, and bathroom
- wear non-slip footwear – like grippy socks provided by staff
- get up slowly after sitting or lying down
- use hand rails and get more help than usual to move around
- call staff for help if you are feeling unwell, dizzy or lightheaded
- use your glasses, walking and hearing aids and keep them within easy reach - and **don't put them on the meal tray** where they can easily get lost
- be extra careful in bathrooms and on wet floors
- **tell staff about any trip or slip hazards as soon as possible**

Your family and visitors can help by:

- letting nursing staff know when they are leaving
- keeping the hospital room and bed area free of clutter
- removing belongings that are no longer needed.

If you do have a fall in hospital, ALWAYS call for help, DO NOT try to get up by yourself. Staff are happy to help you.

Prevent bed sores

In hospital bed sores are called pressure injuries. A pressure injury is redness, a break, or a blister on the skin caused by constant pressure on part of the body.

They can be very painful, take a long time to heal (or sometimes never heal), and may affect your ability to move.

Staff will assess your risk for a pressure injury and may give you some things to help prevent it, like heel protectors or a special mattress.



To avoid pressure injuries, you can:

- change position in bed every 30 minutes (ask a nurse for help if you need it)
- move your body or limbs in bed if safe to do so – even small movements can help
- try to get out of bed and sit in a comfortable well-padded chair at least once a day - try doing it for meals, which can make eating more comfortable
- walk around the room or ward - **only if staff have told you it is OK**
- drink plenty of water and eat healthy food
- keep good posture when sitting
- check your skin for signs of redness or blistering
- moisturise your skin well.



Let nursing staff know straight away if you notice:

- redness that does not go away
- broken or blistered skin
- pain in a fixed area of your body such as your heels or bottom
- tingling or numbness.

If you cannot check all of your body, ask a nurse, family member or carer to check regularly for you.

Prevent blood clots

If you are in hospital for a longer stay, your risk of getting a blood clot in your leg or your lung is higher than usual.

Blood clots in your arm or leg can go to your lungs which is very dangerous. You are more likely to get a blood clot if you have had a major surgery or injury and you are not moving around much.

If you are at risk of a blood clot, you may be given medicines to lower your risk.



There are lots of things you can do to lower your risk of a clot while you are recovering, like:

- keep your legs and ankles moving - ask to talk to a physiotherapist about some gentle exercises you can do in bed
- wear compression stockings if they are given to you - ask staff to help to put them on and let them know if they are causing you discomfort.
- ask for compressions stockings if you think you need them
- drink plenty of water and eat healthy food
- walk around the room or ward - **only if staff have told you it is OK to do so**



Tell staff straight away if you notice:

- swelling, redness or pain in your arm or leg
- skin on your arm or leg is warm to the touch
- difficulty breathing
- chest pain
- coughing, especially coughing up blood





Prevent infections

An infection could slow your recovery and make you feel worse. Germs that cause infections are usually spread by hand contact.

Practising good hand hygiene is one way to avoid infection.

This means:

- use running water and soap or an alcohol-based hand sanitiser to clean your hands
- always wash or sanitise your hands after going to the toilet
- wash or sanitise your hands after coughing and sneezing
- wash or sanitise your hands before eating or touching food
- ask your visitors to clean their hands before visiting your room.

You can remind healthcare staff to wash or sanitise their hands before they examine you.

Other ways to prevent infection include:

- wearing a mask or asking your visitors to wear a mask
- avoid close contact with people who may have a spreadable illness, and ask people not to visit you if they are sick
- try to cough and sneeze into your elbow and wash or sanitise your hands straight away
- follow instructions from staff on how to care for any surgical or open wounds.

Cannula and catheter safety

You may need a cannula or catheter while you are in hospital. Both of these are high risk for infections, so you should take steps to lower your risk.

Cannulas are tiny flexible tubes put into your veins to give you medicines and take blood for tests. A catheter is a tube put into your bladder to remove urine (or wee) while you are having treatment.

What you can do:

- Protect the cannula or catheter from knocks or being pulled
- Wear loose clothing so that the cannula does not get caught
- Keep the cannula area dry while washing and showering
- Ensure the protective dressing stays in place
- Ask staff how often your cannula or catheter has to be changed.
- If your cannula has not been used in the last 24 hours, ask if you still need it.
- If your cannula or catheter is still in when you are going home, ask for it to be removed before you leave.

Tell staff as soon as possible about:

- Redness, pain or swelling at the site
- Feeling hot, cold or shivery
- Leakage from the device
- The dressing getting wet, bloodstained or loose
- If you have any questions or concerns about your cannula or catheter.



Know your medicines

It's important that you keep track of your medicines if you take any. Taking the right medicine at the right time will help you get well.

Using medicines in the wrong way can cause unwanted side effects or affect other treatments you may be having.

Use the template at the back of this book to make a list of your medicines or take photos of the original packaging.

Most hospitals will not let you manage your own medications, including non-prescription ones, while you are in hospital, even if you brought them in from home.

Ask your nurse before taking any medicine of your own during your stay

Medicines may be:



Capsules
and tablets



Sprays
and drops



Injections
and implants



Patches,
creams and
ointments



Inhalers and
puffers



Suppositories
and pessaries



Vitamins and
supplements



Natural or
herbal
remedies

To be medicine-wise in hospital:

- make sure you tell staff about all the medicines you take, including over-the-counter medicines (for example paracetamol), vitamin supplements and herbal remedies
- tell staff if you have had an allergic or bad reaction to any medicines, or if you have trouble swallowing medicines
- tell staff straight away if you feel unwell after taking any medicine
- ask the staff caring for you if you think you should have received some medicines, or the medicines appear different
- make sure all medicines and how to take them are explained to you before you leave hospital
- ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist if you don't understand your medicine instructions.

Questions to ask about new medicines:

- What is this medicine for?
- How do I take it?
 - Before meals or with meals?
 - How many times a day?
 - In the morning or evening?
- Are there any possible side effects?
- How long do I need to take the medicine for?
- Can it be taken safely with the other medicines or supplements I am taking?



Before you go home...

- ☐ Have you organised a safe way to get home?
- ☐ Do you have enough food at home to last until you can go shopping?
- ☐ Ask what you need to do to recover well at home like following a diet, caring for surgical site or avoiding activities.
- ☐ Ask who to call if you have any problems when you get home.
- ☐ Ask the staff how you can get help at home if you need it, for example with transport, shopping, cleaning or making meals.
- ☐ Ask for a medical certificate if you need one
- ☐ Ask staff to return any private x-rays you brought to hospital
- ☐ Check you have any equipment that you brought with you – don't forget your glasses, hearing aids and any chargers.
- ☐ Check if you need to go to any follow-up appointments at the hospital and how to make an appointment if needed.
- ☐ Book an appointment with your GP if you need scripts for any new medication – you will only be given 3 days' worth of medication when you are discharged
- ☐ Get a copy of your discharge summary to give to your GP.



Read your discharge summary before you leave.

This records your symptoms, why you came into hospital, any changes to your medicines, and the plan for future treatments or care. Check the information is correct and that you understand what needs to happen next. You can ask staff to help you.



Ask staff how to get help at home if you need it.

Staff may connect you with a social worker, community nurse or liaison officer. They can help you arrange support for when you go home such as aged care assessments, counselling, nutrition, occupational therapy and physiotherapy.



3. Now you are home

Looking after your health

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

While you are recovering at home, you may still need to take steps to prevent infections, blood clots and pressure injuries. See section 2 for ways to lower your risks.

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.

Support for carers

When you are home from hospital, your carer may need extra help. You can call the Carer Gateway on **1800 422 737** for your local Carers organisation. You can also call this number 24 hours a day to arrange emergency respite care.

Getting 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 chores, 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.



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?

If you do not have family or friends to help you at home, tell staff as soon as possible. They need to know so they can make sure you are safe when you go home.

Check the **Contact Directory** for a list of services that can help you at home.



Preventing falls at home

If you have had a fall, speak to your GP so you can take steps to lower 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 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** like ramps or handrails, if you might need them.
- **Home maintenance.** Fix any uneven surfaces, such as broken paths, wobbly pavers or rotten boards in decks or stairs.
- **Wear safe footwear.** Wear flat, well fitting shoes with good grip.





Medicine safety at home

Keep a list of all the medicines you take, including over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal medicines.

You can use the template at the end of this book to make your medicine list.

- Keep your medicine list 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 local pharmacist for a list of your prescription medicines.
- Ask your local pharmacist to dispose of your unused or out-of-date 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®).
- Ask your pharmacist if they recommend a smart phone app to manage your medicine list and prescriptions.

Ask your GP or pharmacist about a **medicine review** if you:

- take 5 or more medicines,
- have had a recent major health event, or
- are not sure if your medicines are working for you.

Looking after your mental health

It is common to feel sad or down and at times 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 support group.

Call **Medicare Mental Health** on **1800 595 212** for short-term mental health support and help to find longer term support. You can drop-in at the Canberra or Tuggeranong Medicare Mental Health Centres or request a call at canberrammhc.com.au

You can also use the national Medicare Mental Health website to find mental health and wellbeing resources for yourself or someone you care about. See www.medicarementalhealth.gov.au

Peer support

Meeting other people who have similar lived experience can be helpful for your mental health and wellbeing. There are groups that meet in-person and online for many health conditions.

If you find peer support groups in online forums or social media, it is a good idea to check if they are:

- private
- managed by a reputable organisation
- moderated to keep participants safe

See the **Contact Directory** for some peer support organisations.



Giving feedback on your experience

Letting the health service know what was good and what was not good about your care helps them improve their services for everyone.

Every hospital has ways for you provide feedback about your care. You can:

- talk to a staff member
- ask a family member, friend, or carer to help you raise your concerns or speak on your behalf
- provide online feedback on the hospital website
- complete a compliments and complaints form

You can provide feedback during or after your hospital stay

The **ACT Health Services Commissioner** can help if you are not satisfied with how a health service has responded to your complaint or feedback. They are part of the ACT Human Rights Commission. You do not need to make a formal complaint to the health service before you contact them. You can get free advice at any time.

Phone: **02 6205 2222**

Email: HRCIntake@act.gov.au

Find out more: hrc.act.gov.au/complaints/

HCCA's Guide to Health Care Complaints and Feedback has tips to help you:

- find the right place to give feedback
- understand the complaints process
- write a clear complaint
- seek advice and support

Go to hcca.org.au/takeaction or scan:



4. Contact Directory

Here are contact details for most hospitals in Canberra and some helpful support services.

Each hospital has information for patients on their website, including specific things you may need to bring.

Public Hospitals (Canberra Health Services)

Canberra Hospital, Centenary Hospital for Women and Children, North Canberra Hospital and University of Canberra Hospital

Phone: **02 5124 0000**

Website: www.canberrahealthservices.act.gov.au

National Capital Private Hospital

Phone: **02 6222 6666**

Website: www.nationalcapitalprivatehospital.com.au

Calvary Bruce Private Hospital

Phone: **02 6245 3100**

Website: www.calvarycare.org.au/bruce-private-hospital

Calvary John James Private Hospital

Phone: **02 6281 8100**

Website: www.calvarycare.org.au/john-james-private-hospital-canberra

Barton Private Hospital

Phone: **02 6206 6400**

Website: curagroup.com.au/hospital/barton-private-hospital

Deakin Private Hospital

Phone: **02 5114 8100**

Website: deakinprivate.com.au

Travelling for your care?

The ACT Interstate Patient Travel Assistance Scheme can help with some costs if you need to travel for health care that you can't get in the ACT. Call **025124 9082** or email IPTAS@act.gov.au

If you are a **DVA Veteran Cardholder**, call **1800 550 455** for travel support.

Other hospital and health services

The ACT Advance Care Planning team can help you make and lodge your plan so your health care choices are clear if you cannot speak for yourself. Contact them by phone on **02 5124 9274** or email at acp@act.gov.au

The Liaison and Navigation Service (LaNS) helps people with complex health or social needs access the health system.

They can help you:

- find the right health services for your needs
- arrange the care that you need
- plan for changes in your health
- connect with community services

Refer yourself by phone **02 5124 5030** or email LaNS@act.gov.au

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officers (ALOs):

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can contact an ALO for emotional, social and cultural support, and information.

- The Canberra Hospital, University of Canberra Hospital or Centenary Hospital for Women and Children: phone **02 5124 2055** or email ALOService@act.gov.au
- Calvary Bruce Private Hospital phone **0488 739 005** or email ALO@calvarycare.org.au

You can also ask the staff in hospital to get them to visit you.

Veteran's Liaison Officers (VLOs) can help veterans and their families. You can ask nursing staff to contact them for you, or contact them yourself.

- The Canberra Hospital: Call **02 5124 3696** or email: VeteransLiaison-TCH@act.gov.au
- North Canberra Hospital: Call **0481 453 102** or email: CHSNCH.DLNVLO@act.gov.au
- University of Canberra Hospital: ask to speak to a liaison nurse who will visit you in your room

If you are staying in a private hospital, ask for them to contact the Veteran's liaison for you.

NDIS Hospital Liaison Officers (HLOs): If you are an NDIS participant, you or your carer should let the hospital staff know. HLOs can help you if:

- if your NDIS plan needs to change during your hospital stay
- if you need to apply for the NDIS while in hospital
- to make sure you have supports ready when you get home.

Call the NDIS on **1800 800 110** or visit:

www.ndis.gov.au/participants/life-transitions/transitioning-other-systems/guide-your-hospital-stay

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 70+ years)

Contact Central Health Intake on **02 5124 9977** for more information.

Home and community support

Community Assistance and Temporary Supports (CATS): If you are under 65 you may be able to get temporary help at home through the ACT Government's CATS Program. You can find out more by searching for "CATS" on www.act.gov.au.

Transition Care through My Aged Care: Older people can get help to recover from a hospital stay. You can get short-term support with:

- cleaning and shopping
- home and garden maintenance
- meals
- bathing, dressing and moving around
- nursing and allied health

Call My Aged Care on **1800 200 422** or ask hospital staff to arrange an assessment before you leave hospital. You can find more information at: www.myagedcare.gov.au/aged-care-programs/transition-care

Aged Care Finders: This program helps vulnerable older people who do not have other people to support them to access aged care. They can help you apply for My Aged Care, find services in your area and connect you other support. Find a care finder at: www.myagedcare.gov.au/help-care-finder

COTA ACT's Seniors Information Service can help older people with information and referrals to a wide range of service including home assistance, transport, finances and social activities. Phone them on **02 6282 3777** or by email at: contact@cotaact.org.au

Community Bus Service: Some community services have accessible bus transport for medical appointments, shopping and social activities while you are recovering. They can help ACT residents of any age who find it hard to use other transport. They may have other transport options if you cannot use the bus. www.act.gov.au/community/older-canberrans/community-bus

Community and peer support organisations:

Canberra Lung Life Support Group (via the Lung Foundation)

1800 654 301
lungfoundation.com.au

Heart Support Australia

02 6253 0097
www.heartsupport.org.au

Eyes for Life Canberra

02 6176 3470
eflc.org.au

QENDO (for endometriosis and pelvic pain conditons)

1800 275 376
www.qendo.org.au

Heart Kids

1800 432 785
www.heartkids.org.au

Carers ACT

1800 422 737 (option 1)
www.carersact.org.au

Palliative Care ACT

02 6255 5771
www.pallcareact.org.au

Parkinson's ACT	1800 122 322 fightingparkinsons.org.au
Cancer Council ACT	13 11 20 www.actcancer.org
Dementia Australia	1800 100 500 www.dementia.org.au
MND (Motor Neurone Disease) Australia	1800 777 175 www.mndaustralia.org.au
Diabetes Australia	1800 177 055 www.diabetesaustralia.com.au
Asthma Australia	1800 278 462 asthma.org.au
Epilepsy ACT	1300 852 853 epilepsyact.org.au
Meridian (LGBTIQA+ people and people living with HIV)	02 6257 2855 www.meridianact.org.au
Open Arms (mental health support for Veterans)	1800 011 046 www.openarms.gov.au
CAHMA (for people who use drugs)	02 6257 3643 www.cahma.org.au
Arthritis, Pain Support and Emerge ACT	1800 011 041 www.arthritisact.org.au
Disability Gateway	1800 643 787 www.disabilitygateway.gov.au

Volunteering ACT's Community Information Hub can help you find more local support groups. Call them on **02 6248 7988**, visit 20 Genge Street, Canberra City or visit their website at volunteeringact.org.au/community-info-hub/.

5. Templates and notes

My key health information

Use this to help you remember key health information to share with health care staff before your admission.

Card details (bring your card/s to appointments)

Medicare #: _____ Expiry: _____ / _____

Health Fund: _____ Membership #: _____

Concession or Pension #: _____

Emergency Contact

Name and relationship: _____

Contact Details: _____

☐ I have an advance care plan. It is kept: _____

☐ I have given my advance care plan to the hospital.

Allergies:

Your medical history

Condition	History (e.g. date of diagnosis or surgery)

Family medical history

Family member	Condition/s and age of onset

General Practitioner

Name:
Practice:
Contact Details:

Specialists (e.g. Psychiatrist, Rheumatologist, Cardiologist)

Name:
Specialty type:
Practice:
Contact Details:

Name:
Specialty type:
Practice:
Contact Details:

Name:
Specialty type:
Practice:
Contact Details:

Preferred Pharmacy

Name:
Address:
Contact Details:

Medicine List for _____

Medicine name e.g. Celecoxib (Celebrex)	Dose e.g. 100mg capsule	How & when to take it e.g. 1 capsule with food in the morning	What is it for? e.g. Arthritis	Prescribed by e.g. Dr Smith, GP

Medicine List for _____

Medicine name e.g. Celecoxib (Celebrex)	Dose e.g. 100mg capsule	How & when to take it e.g. 1 capsule with food in the morning	What is it for? e.g. Arthritis	Prescribed by e.g. Dr Smith, GP

Follow up notes

Use this space to take notes about your hospital admission and follow up appointments. If you can't write them, ask if it is ok to record the instructions or video any exercises using your phone.

Follow up appointments:

Date:	Date:
Time:	Time:
Location:	Location:

Who to call if you have problems in the first few days at home

Name:

Role:

Phone number:

Care instructions:

Write down what your health care team tells you to do to take care of yourself at home.

[illegible]

Other notes:

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue dashed lines, similar to standard primary-ruled notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Download more resources and templates
at hcca.org.au/staying-safe or scan:



 hcca.org.au



 cbrhl.org.au

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