

GO TO THE HOSPITAL OR STAY HERE?

A Decision Guide for Residents and Families

About half of all hospital transfers are avoidable. This guide will help you understand why transfers are made and how to get involved in the decision.

If it is an emergency...

Staff may call 911 to send you to the emergency room. They will also call your medical provider and your family.

If it is not an emergency...

Your caregivers will assess your condition and your doctor, family or friend(s) may be called. **If you have concerns about being transferred, now is the time to speak up.**

Reasons to Stay Here

Tests and treatments are available, including:

- Medications
- Blood tests and X-rays (in some locations)
- Wound care
- Comfort care such as pain relief, fluids and bed rest
- Intravenous (IV) fluids

Your caregivers will check on you and communicate with your health care provider.

Reasons to Transfer

Hospitals can provide complex tests and treatments, including:

- Heart monitoring
- Body scans
- Intensive care
- Blood transfusion
- Surgery

Going to the hospital can be stressful and can expose you to greater risks for falls and infections.



You can be involved in the decision.

You have the right to know how decisions about your care are being made.

You are encouraged to talk with any of the following people about your care:

- Doctor, nurse or medical provider
- Social worker
- Spiritual advisor
- Family or close friend

You can make your preferences known by:

- Writing down your wishes and telling people where to find what you have written
- Completing advance directive documents such as:
 - Power of attorney for health care
 - Health care proxy: Names someone to make health care decisions for you if you cannot
 - Living will: Documents your preferences for your end-of-life care
 - Request for a do not resuscitate (DNR) order or a do not hospitalize (DNH) order
 - Physician orders for life sustaining treatment (POLST) or similar form

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why would my medical provider consider transferring me?

If you experience an injury or a serious change in your condition, your medical provider may consider sending you to the hospital.

2. How much say do I really have in the final decision?

That is up to you. Some people want to make the decision. Others want a medical provider to make the decision for them. Your medical provider can talk to you and your family so you can make the decision together. If you want to be transferred to the hospital or stay here against the advice of your medical provider, you may be asked to sign a form saying you take responsibility for your decision.

3. What happens in an emergency?

If 911 is called, you will receive on-the-spot treatment from an ambulance crew and be sent to the nearest hospital.

4. Will the nursing home hold my room while I am gone? What will happen to my things?

Policies differ from nursing home to nursing home. In most cases, though, your room will be held for several days.

If you are concerned, ask someone about what happens with your room and your personal belongings.

Special Information for Family Members of Residents Who Have Dementia

1. Will my family member be sent to the hospital even if he/she has a form of dementia?

Your family member will be sent to the hospital if needed, unless he/she is in the advanced stages of the disease, is in hospice or has advance directives specifying no hospital care.

2. Can my family member still participate in the discussion about a possible hospital transfer?

That depends on how advanced the memory problem is and how sick your family member is at the time. Those who are in the early stages of Alzheimer's, or other forms of dementia, are capable of expressing their wishes. Those in advanced stages may not be.

3. Even if my family member cannot express his/her wishes, should we tell him/her what is happening?

Yes. Your family member has the right to know what is happening and may become anxious or frightened if moved to an unfamiliar place without explanation. Be sure to use simple, direct words such as, "You are sick" or, "Your doctor thinks you should go to the hospital." Use a quiet, calm voice when explaining the situation to your loved one.

