

# Caregiver Assistance News

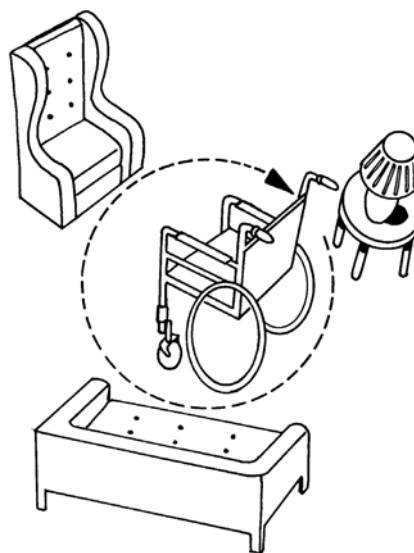
“CARING FOR YOU... CARING FOR OTHERS”

## Coming Home from the Hospital – Prepare the Home

The main concern in any home is safety. Accidents can happen, but with a little planning, falls can be prevented. Take a close look at the home where you will provide care. You may want to ask a relative or friend to look at it with you to make sure you haven't overlooked any safety hazards. You can also rely on a social worker's assessment if you have a care plan.

For the safest home, follow as many of these steps as possible:

- ✓ Remove any furniture that is not needed. Clutter is dangerous.
- ✓ Place the remaining furniture so that there is enough space for a walker or wheelchair. This will avoid the need for an elderly or disabled person to move around coffee tables and other barriers. Move any low tables that are in the way.
- ✓ Once the person in your care has gotten used to where the furniture is, do not change it.
- ✓ Make sure furniture will not move or break if it is leaned on.
- ✓ Make sure the armrests of a favorite chair are long enough to help the person get up and down.
- ✓ Add cushioning to sharp corners on furniture and avoid using glass tables.
- ✓ Make chair seats 20 inches high. (Wood blocks or a wooden platform can be placed under large, heavy furniture to raise it



To accommodate wheelchair, arrange furniture 5 1/2 feet apart

to this level.) The chair must be easy to get out of.

- ✓ Have a carpenter install railings in places where a person might need extra support. (Using a carpenter can ensure that railings can bear a person's full weight and will not give way.)
- ✓ Place stickers or colored tape on glass doors.
- ✓ Have a lamp and automatic night-lights.
- ✓ Clear fire-escape routes.
- ✓ Provide smoke alarms on every floor and inside every bedroom (see your local laws on requirements).
- ✓ Place a fire extinguisher in the kitchen, but make sure it is the correct one for household fires.

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- ✓ Think about using monitors.
- ✓ Place nonskid tape on the edges of stairs (and consider painting the edge of the first and last step a different color from the floor).
- ✓ Remove area throw rugs; even using backing tape is *not* a guarantee of safety.
- ✓ It is easier to walk on thin-pile carpet than on thick-pile. Avoid busy patterns.
- ✓ Remove all hazards that might lead to tripping.
- ✓ Keep electrical and telephone cords secured and out of the way.
- ✓ Adjust rapidly closing doors.
- ✓ Place protective screens on fireplaces.
- ✓ Cover exposed hot-water pipes.
- ✓ Provide enough no-glare lighting—indirect is best.
- ✓ Place light switches next to room entrances so the lights can be turned on before entering a room. Consider “clap-on” lamps beside the bed.

**Bathroom Safety**

Many accidents happen in bathrooms, so do a safety check.

- Cover all sharp edges with rubber cushioning.
- Put lights in the medicine cabinets so mistakes are not made when taking medications.
- Remove locks on bathroom doors.
- Use nonskid safety strips or a nonslip bath mat in the tub or shower.
- Think about putting a grab bar on the edge of the vanity. (Do not use a towel bar.)
- Install grab bars in showers.
- Remove glass shower doors or replace them with unbreakable plastic or tempered safety glass.
- Place a bath and shower seat in the tub or shower.
- Use only electrical appliances with a ground fault interrupted (GFI) feature.
- Set the hot water thermostat below 120° F.
- Use faucets that mix hot and cold water, or paint hot water knobs/faucets red.
- Put in toilet guard-rails or provide a portable toilet seat with built-in rails.



### *Taking Care of Yourself* — **When You Doubt the Time Is Right for Discharge**

According to federal law, a hospital must release patients in a reasonable manner for safety or else must keep them in the hospital. Letting a patient leave the hospital is not wise if the person has constant fever; wounds; requires injections; has infection or pain that cannot be controlled; is confused or disoriented (no sense of time or place); or is unable to take food or liquids by mouth. However, in some cases, it may be better for the person to be released because the noise and risk of catching other diseases may make it more difficult to recover. If you plan to appeal a discharge, understand the rules of Medicare, Medicaid, the HMO, or the person's insurance plan. Always request a discharge plan with clear instructions in writing because this is your road map of care.

### **RESOURCE for YOU**

Google “A Family Caregiver’s Guide to Hospital Discharge Planning”, a publication of the National Alliance for Caregiving and the United Hospital Fund of New York.

### **Live Life Laughing!**

*Bad news. Our health plan only covers the first three litters.*



### *Inspiration*

*We sleep to remember and we sleep to forget. It's overnight therapy.*

### **Don't Fall – Be Safe**

Lack of physical activity in the hospital results in poor muscle tone, decreased bone mass, loss of balance, and reduced flexibility—plus taking multiple medications—increases the risk of falling.

## Caregiving in The Comfort of Home®

### Our Purpose

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

### Ordering Info

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## SAFETY TIPS—Coming Home from the Hospital

- ★ *Assess the person's condition and needs.*
- ★ *Become part of the health care team (doctor, nurse, therapists) so you can learn how to provide care.*
- ★ *Get complete written instructions from the doctor. If there is anything you don't understand, ASK QUESTIONS.*
- ★ *Develop a plan of care with the healthcare provider.*
- ★ *Meet with the hospital's social worker or discharge planner to determine home care benefits.*
- ★ *Understand in-home assistance options and arrange for in-home help.*
- ★ *Arrange physical, occupational, and speech therapy as needed.*
- ★ *Find out if medicine is provided by the hospital to take home. If not, you will have to have prescriptions filled before you take the person home.*
- ★ *Buy needed supplies; rent, borrow, or buy equipment such as wheelchairs, crutches, and walkers.*

NEXT ISSUE... UNDERSTANDING LUNG DISEASE – SHORTNESS OF BREATH