

Leaving hospital

Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio tape or computer disk, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please telephone the PALS desk on 01271 314090.

Now you are in hospital, we will start to make plans for you to go back out as soon as you are well enough. We will work with you to make sure this goes as smoothly as possible, with all the necessary arrangements in place.

This leaflet will:

- answer some of the common questions about leaving hospital
- explain what is likely to happen
- explain how you can help and prepare

When will I leave hospital?

You will be in hospital as long as you need the care and treatment that it provides. Your doctor and ward team will give you an estimated day when you could leave. **This is an estimate** and will be reviewed constantly by the team looking after you, as circumstances can change. They will discuss the plans with you to find out what support, if any, you might need on leaving hospital.

The planned date for you to leave this hospital is:

(if this is blank, please ask a member of the ward team to fill it in)

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How will I get home?

You are expected to make your own transport arrangements home unless your clinical condition means you need to be transferred by ambulance.

We would appreciate it if you could arrange to be picked up on the morning that you are discharged. By making travel arrangements for the morning, you help the hospital by freeing up vital space for an emergency patient – who knows, the next time it could be you waiting for a bed.

You may be able to use an Infopoint phone unit at your hospital. This offers free calls to local taxi firms and to Traveline, which has details of public transport. Staff can also help arrange taxis – just ask.

If you do not have anyone to pick you up and you are unable to use public transport services, there are a range of services which may be able to help.

For all general enquiries contact the Single Point of Contact (SPoC) (Contact numbers at the back of this leaflet). It can organise hospital transport for admission, discharge and any follow-up appointments, but please call at least 48 hours ahead of your journey so arrangements can be made. The cost is around 40p per mile, of which 23p is refundable if you are on certain benefits.

Can I get help with transport costs?

Some people may be eligible for help with their transport costs. To find out more, ask the ward staff for an HC11 leaflet (Help with Health Costs).

Who decides that I am ready to leave hospital?

This decision will be made by the team of doctors, nurses and therapists looking after you and in discussion with you. It is in everybody's interest to make sure that, once you are fit to go, you do not have to wait around.

Once you have been told that you can leave, any medicines that you brought into hospital will be returned to you.

Any new medication that you need to take with you will be ordered. The doctor will write the prescription and send it to the hospital pharmacy, which will dispense it for you – this may take some time.

The nurse or pharmacist will explain what your medication is for, how and when to take it and any side effects to watch out for. If this is not clear, please ask them to explain again as it is important that you understand. You may find it helpful to fill in the chart on the opposite page to remind you when to take your medication.

Remember – do not stop taking your medication until you have finished the course or until your doctor tells you that you no longer need it. If you are unhappy about any side-effects, you can discuss these with your hospital doctor or pharmacist or, once you are home, with your GP or community pharmacist. If you really do not want to take the medication, then tell your GP not to order any more. Please do not continue to ask for repeat prescriptions if you do not need them.

The hospital doctor will write a letter to your GP about the treatment you have had and you will be given a copy. **Remember, once you are out of hospital, your GP will not visit unless you contact the surgery and make arrangements.** GPs and district nurses will not usually visit unless you are acutely unwell or unable to leave the house. Generally, if you can get to the shops or to the church, for example, you are expected to visit the GP surgery for any care that you might need once you have left hospital.

What if I have any worries or concerns?

If there is anything that you do not understand about the care you receive, please do not go home and worry, but ask us about it before you leave. Nobody will mind. We cannot put things right unless you tell us and most problems can be solved by talking to ward staff before you go home. If you are concerned about your healthcare once you get home, you will need to speak to your GP.

Can I choose to stay in hospital?

No patient has the right to stay in a hospital bed when they have been told that they are well enough to leave. If they did so, they would be preventing someone else from getting the care and treatment to which they have a right.

Drug Name	What it's used for	When to take it				How Long for?
		Morning	Lunch	Evening	Night	

Benefits

If you have been in hospital for some time and are normally in receipt of benefits, you will need to let the Department of Work and Pensions know that you are leaving hospital, so these can be readjusted if necessary.

Will I be able to cope once I leave hospital?

If you think you will be unable to cope at home after leaving hospital, there are some options:

- It may be possible to arrange for support to be provided for you at home
- You may decide to move into a residential or nursing home
- You may decide to live with another family member, or for someone to live with you

If you would like someone to support and advise you with these decisions, please ask your nursing team as soon as possible.

What if I need specialist equipment?

The occupational therapist (OT) will speak to you about any equipment you might need when you leave the hospital (e.g. a toilet seat raiser, commode, perching stool etc). This will be ordered by the OT and usually delivered to where you will be staying once you leave hospital. Usually the OT will decide with you how long you will need the equipment for. When you receive the equipment, there will be a form which tells you how to return the equipment once you no longer need it. If you think you will need the equipment for longer, then you will need to discuss it with OT or with your consultant if you have a follow up outpatients appointment.

The equipment is usually supplied by the Community Equipment Store (CES) and they can be contacted on 01392 204144.

What about support at home, and nursing or residential homes?

There are agencies that can supply care workers to help you at home. This can make all the difference if you have nobody else to help.

There are also many independently-run homes that provide residential care on either a long- or short-term basis. Residential homes provide full accommodation and meals, and look after your washing, for example. Nursing homes do the same, but provide nursing care as well.

You can choose to pay for these services independently or if you want to find out whether you can have financial support, you can be assessed against the eligibility criteria. Please ask the nursing staff for more information. We can get someone to support you with making the decision and identifying care homes in the area.

What should I do if I have problems after leaving hospital?

If you have a care worker and they have not arrived at the expected time, then you will need to phone Care Direct on 0845 155 1007

If you had thought that you would be able to cope but now find that you do need help at home, then phone Care Direct to discuss your requirements. It does usually take a few days to sort this out, so help is unlikely to arrive immediately if you had not previously requested it.

If you have any concerns about your health, phone your GP surgery to arrange an appointment with the GP or practice nurse (remember you should not expect a home visit unless you are housebound). If your GP surgery is not open, you can contact either NHS Direct (0845 4647) or Devon Doctors on Call (0845 6710 270).

Before leaving hospital

Make sure that:

- You have all your personal belongings
- You have a supply of medicines or dressings, and that you know how to use them
- Any aids or equipment are ready for you
- You know who to contact if you have any problems or queries once you get home. If you are not sure, please ask.
- You know about any out-patient appointments or GP appointments that are needed
- You ask the nursing team whether the district nurse will be visiting

Further information

If you have any questions or concerns about leaving hospital, please speak to your nurse or doctor before leaving the ward.

Useful contacts

NHS Direct 0845 46 47 (www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)

Care Direct 0845 155 1007

Community Equipment Store (CES) 01392 204144

Age Concern 0800 009 966

Help the Aged 0808 800 6565

Carers In Devon 08456 431 341 (www.devon.gov.uk/carers)

Stroke Association 0845 3033 100

Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS) 01271 314090

Macmillan Support Line 0808 808 0000

Single Point of Contact (SPoC) (Transport queries)

Exeter, East Devon and Teignbridge 01404 46529

Mid Devon 01884 242099

North Devon 01271 314332

West Devon and South Hams 01822 617525

Devondoctors on Call (GP out of hours) 0845 6710 270

North Devon District Hospital

Information Centre 01271 314091

Website www.northdevonhealth.nhs.uk (including the Information Centre and patient information leaflets)

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or e-mail: pals@ndevon.swest.nhs.uk You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple or alternatively it may be possible for us to arrange an appointment in your area.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of the ward staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Tell Us What You Think' comment cards are on all wards or online at www.northdevonhealth.nhs.uk

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