

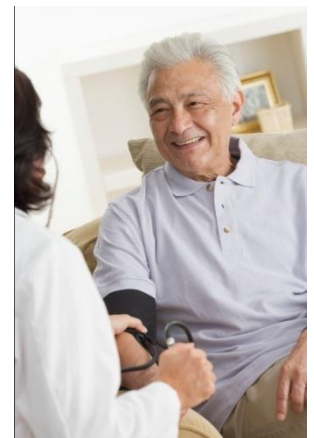
# KNOW *BEFORE* YOU GO

## Steps Toward Better Care

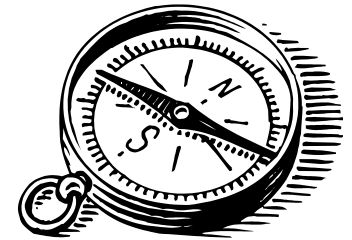


# Goals

- What can you do now to manage your own healthcare- before you become a patient in the hospital?
- Let's learn more about how to navigate your way through the healthcare system -before, during, and after you leave the hospital.
- Our goal: Learn the steps for a safe care transition.



# Plan ahead

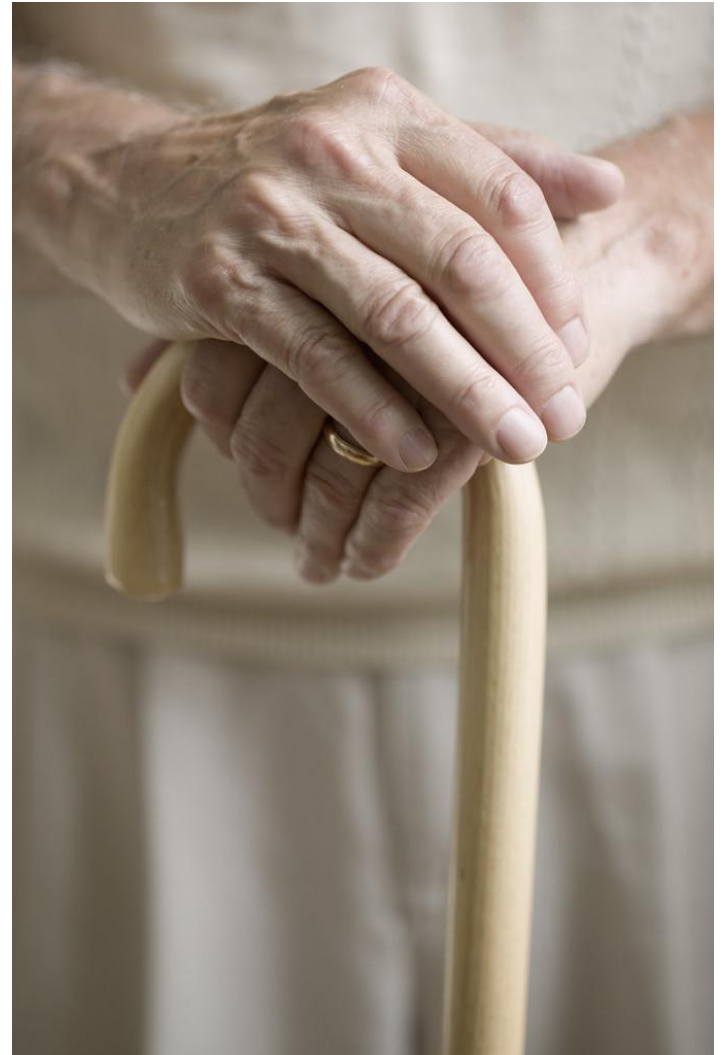


- Talk to your family, friends, neighbors, or members of your faith community about who is able to help you if you become ill.
- Purse or wallet? Make sure you carry a complete list of your current medications.
- Carry a copy of your personal health record-and have a copy in a visible place in your home in case of an emergency.
- Talk to your doctor and your family about your health goals and about your advanced care directives.

# Older adults and hospitals

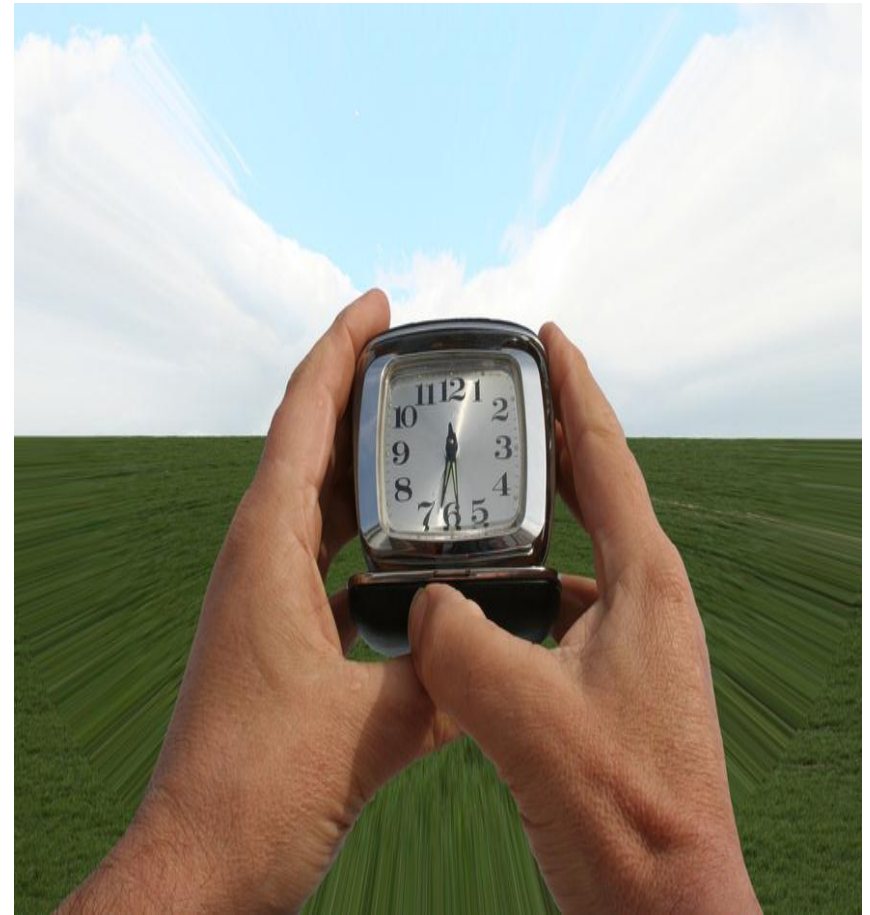
## Some key facts:

- 20% of people who are 65+ will be hospitalized within a 12 month period.
- 70% will be admitted through the emergency room for an unplanned visit.
- 1 in 5 seniors will be readmitted to the hospital within 30 days of discharge.
- The second visit may be longer and more complex.



# Healing care

- Hospital stays are much shorter now . 2-3 days is common.
- Discharge is most likely to happen when you are **not** completely ready.
- Most of your healing care may take place at home.
- There are some things that you can do to ensure that you don't wind up back in the hospital.



# Bring an advocate

- Having a family member or friend to help you when you are in the hospital is important.
- It's a busy place with shift changes and different people providing care- you need your advocate to provide continuity and to make sure your concerns are addressed.
- It's complicated! You will need assistance in managing your care.



# Tips for discharge

- Two heads are better than one! On the day of discharge, be sure to have your advocate with you to listen to the discharge instructions.
- Ask questions about the warning signs of a worsening condition.
- Ask your advocate to make notes to help you remember later.



# Concerned about how you'll manage at home?

- It's important to speak up about your concerns *before* discharge.
- If you are weak and worried about getting around, ask for a physical therapy evaluation.
- If you are concerned about dressing, bathing, and cooking, ask for an occupational therapy evaluation.
- If you are worried about finances, housing, utilities, food, in-home care or the cost of your meds, ask to speak to the social worker.
- If you have questions about your condition, treatments you may need to do at home or your medicine, speak to your doctor, your nurse or both.



# Four key steps for a successful hospital stay... and a successful discharge.



1. Manage your medications.
2. Know your warning signs of a worsening condition.
3. Make & keep all follow up appointments with your doctor.
4. Keep your own written personal health record.

# The First Step—Manage your medications

- You may already be managing many medications.
- A stay in the hospital can change what meds you take and how you take them.
- Tell the hospital staff what medicines you currently take.
- Always keep an updated list of your medication in your wallet or purse, including over-the-counter meds, vitamins and herbs.



# Know your medicine



- Before you leave the hospital, get a current list of your medicine, the dose and how to take them.
- Learn about the side effects of each of your meds.
- Ask about ALL medicines- those *before* the hospital and the new ones *added* in the hospital.
- Have a plan to keep your medicine organized.

# Organize your medications



- Setting your medications up once a week in a mediset helps you to keep track of the meds you need to take every day. It also helps to make sure you take them at the right time of day.
- If you have trouble organizing your meds, community pharmacies are available, for a fee, to set up your meds and deliver them.

# Ask Questions about your Medicine



- Be sure to ask questions like:
  - What are they for?
  - How should I take them?
  - When and how often should I take them?
  - Will I need to continue taking them once I feel better?
- **ALWAYS ASK.** You need to know. You will stay healthier and safer when you get all of your questions answered before you go home.
- It helps to use one pharmacy for all medications so the pharmacist can check for any negative interactions.

# Getting your new medications

- When you are leaving the hospital, have a plan for getting your new or changed medications. Don't miss a dose.
- If you use a mail-order pharmacy, tell the nurse and social worker so they can:
  - ✓ Get your medicine orders faxed to the mail-order pharmacy.
  - ✓ Arrange for a “short fill” of new and changed meds to tide you over until you get your order in the mail.
- Some pharmacies are closed at night or on Sundays. Work with the hospital staff to make sure you don't miss doses.
- After discharge, arrange to go to the pharmacy right away for your meds .
- If you can't afford your medicine, talk to the social worker well before discharge.

# The Second Step—Know Your Warning Signs



- These are also called “Red Flags”-a sign that tells you that your condition is getting worse.
- Before you leave the hospital, **ASK** what you should watch for and then :
  - Write it down. Ask your advocate to help you.
  - Don’t leave the hospital without the list of warning signs.



# ACT on the Warning Signs

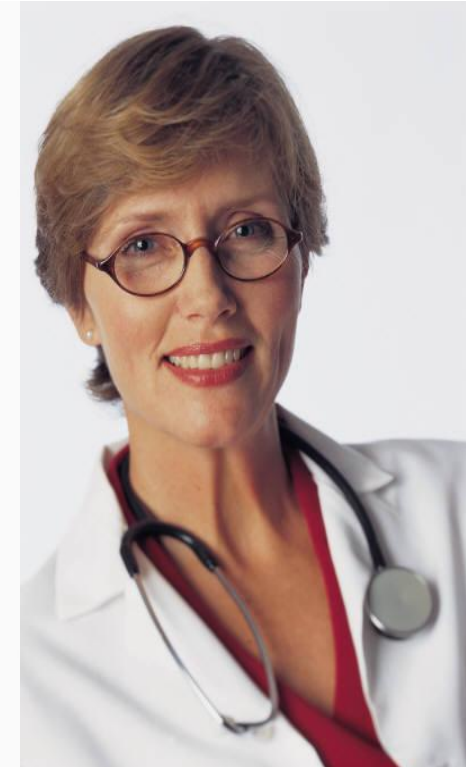
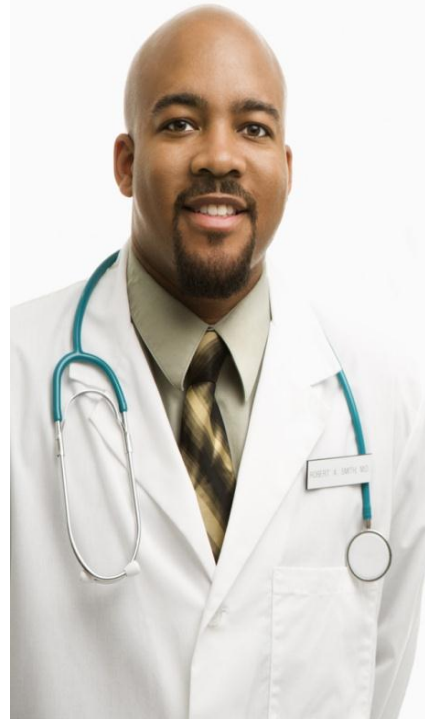


- Call your doctor right away when you think you see a “red flag” or warning sign of a worsening condition.
- An important rule of thumb: Contact the doctor who is managing that condition.
- Ask for help- if you can’t contact your doctor, ask your family or friends to do it for you.
- Know who to call after hours and on the weekends—the doctor, the walk-in clinic or 911.
- **YOU** know your body-take action and do not wait until you are sick to seek help.

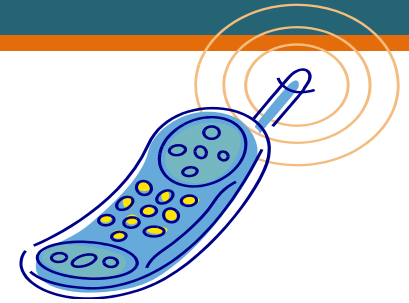


# The third step—make and keep all follow up appointments with your doctor

- Your doctor may not know you were in the hospital. Don't assume that your doctor has been informed about your condition.
- It's really important that you see your doctor **no later** than 1 week after discharge.
- Write questions down as you think of them so you are ready for your appointment.



# Calling your doctor



- You need to see your doctor no later than one week after you leave the hospital-maybe even sooner.
- When you call, tell the staff that you just got out of the hospital and need to see your doctor.
- If they tell you there are no openings, ask to speak to the nurse.
- **Be assertive**-don't take no for an answer.
- When you go into the office, bring your discharge instructions with you.
- Bring your written questions and a list of all of the meds you are taking (including vitamins, herbs and over-the-counter medicines)
- Consider bringing your advocate into the exam room with you to listen and take notes.

# Speaking up

The doctor's office  
is a busy place.

Some magic words to  
use when you call:

- ✓ I was just in the hospital.
- ✓ I have a new medical condition.
- ✓ I have questions about my new medicines.
- ✓ My doctor will need to do follow up on some tests.



# Get the right care-at the right level

- Ask your doctor how to handle each warning sign. You or your advocate should write it down.
- Ask your doctor what warning signs need urgent attention.
- Calling your doctor after-hours, on weekends and holidays is OK. You may speak to an on-call doctor.
- Some warning signs might be safely managed with a call to your doctor's nurse.
- Some warning signs may require an appointment that day.
- Some will require a trip to the Emergency Department.
- Not sure? Call the doctor or call 911.

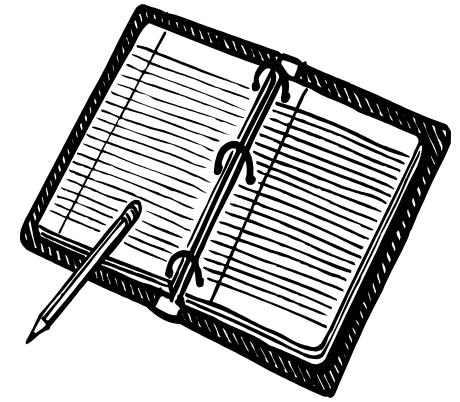
# Make your plans in advance

- Once you set the doctor's appointment, make a reliable plan you can count on to get you there.
- Ask your family, a neighbor, a friend or a member of your faith community to bring you to the doctor.
- If you need transportation, call "Getting Around Puget Sound to discuss your options: **425-943-6760**
- Call your "helper" the day before with a reminder of your appointment.
- If you are eligible for Medicaid and need a ride, call:  
**1-800-923-7433**



## The Fourth Step

# Your Personal Health Record



Include information about:

- Your **goals** for your health care- including your *advanced care directives*
- Illnesses, problems, past hospital visits
- Lab work, tests
- Current medications you are taking
- Food, drug allergies and bad reactions to any medicines
- Immunizations, oral health care, eye exams, physicals

# Additional Step For Persons With Hearing Loss\*

- At your pre-admission hospital visit and on check-in, discuss your hearing loss and communication needs and ask that a note about your hearing loss be placed in your records.
- Inform your doctor, surgeon, anesthesiologist and hospital personnel of your hearing loss.
- Inquire about medications that may affect your hearing
- For additional tips purchase the low-cost, easy-to-use HLA-WA Hospital Communication Kit from the Hearing Loss Association of Washington.  
<http://hearingloss-wa.org/support/hospital-kit/>
- Swedish Hospital has available, at the time of admission, a similar Hospital Kit for Patients with Hearing Loss AND also has printable communication aids on their website.  
<http://www.swedish.org/Patient-Visitor-Info/Accessibility/Printable-Communication-Aids#axzz1xcrWpKRJ>

\*Added by the Bellevue Network on Aging.

- **When it comes to your body, you are the expert.**
- Doctors' offices and hospitals may not pass on your health information to each other in a complete or timely manner.
- If you hear misinformation about your condition or care, it's important to **speak up**. Make sure they know the whole story.
- Remember-**You** are the most accurate source of health information about yourself.

# It's your job.

Nothing about me—without  
me.

**I am in charge of my  
medical care.**

**If you have a  
question,  
ASK ME!**



# Not Ready To Go Home?

- The hospital may plan to discharge you before you feel that you are able to leave.
- If so, call **1-877-290-4346**- the Medicare Discharge Appeals line- before the end of the day of the planned discharge. Tell them you want an expedited hearing about your discharge.
- They will review your record and make a decision by noon of the following day.



You need to know-

## ***Am I admitted or observed?***

- Ask the doctor or hospital social worker:  
Have I been admitted to the hospital as an inpatient or am I in observation status?
- Unless you have been **admitted** to the hospital as an **inpatient** for the time period required by MEDICARE, MEDICARE will not pay for nursing home care.
- **ASK** if you have been in the hospital long enough to have MEDICARE pay for your recovery in a nursing home if needed.

\*Page modified by Bellevue Network on Aging

# While you are healing, you may need help at home.

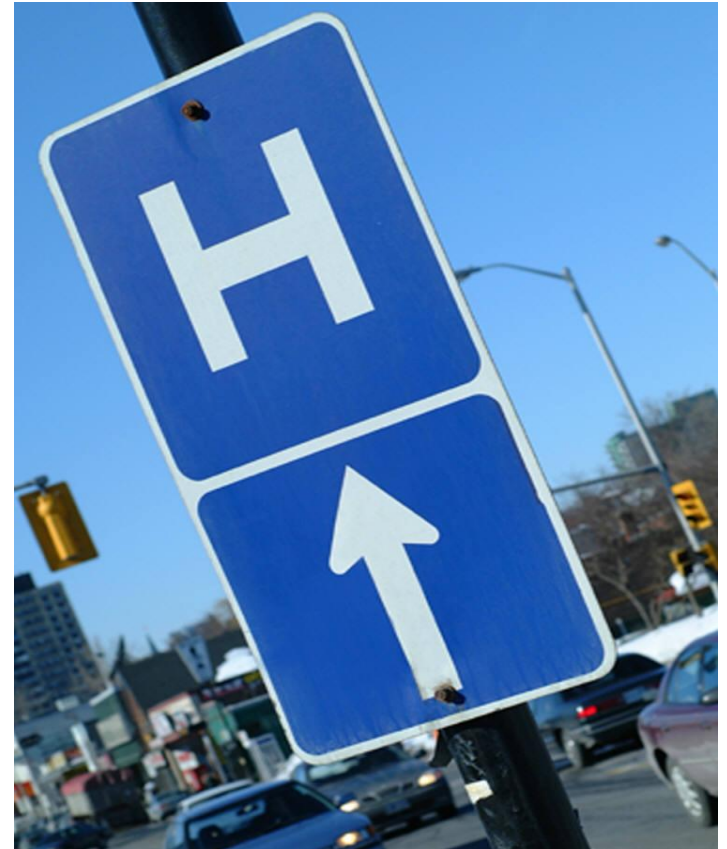
MEDICARE will pay for home health care:

- if you are homebound,
- need skilled care, such as nursing, physical therapy, speech therapy or occupational therapy
- and have a **doctor's order**.
- Talk to the social worker about resources for home.
- Ask for this help BEFORE you leave the hospital.



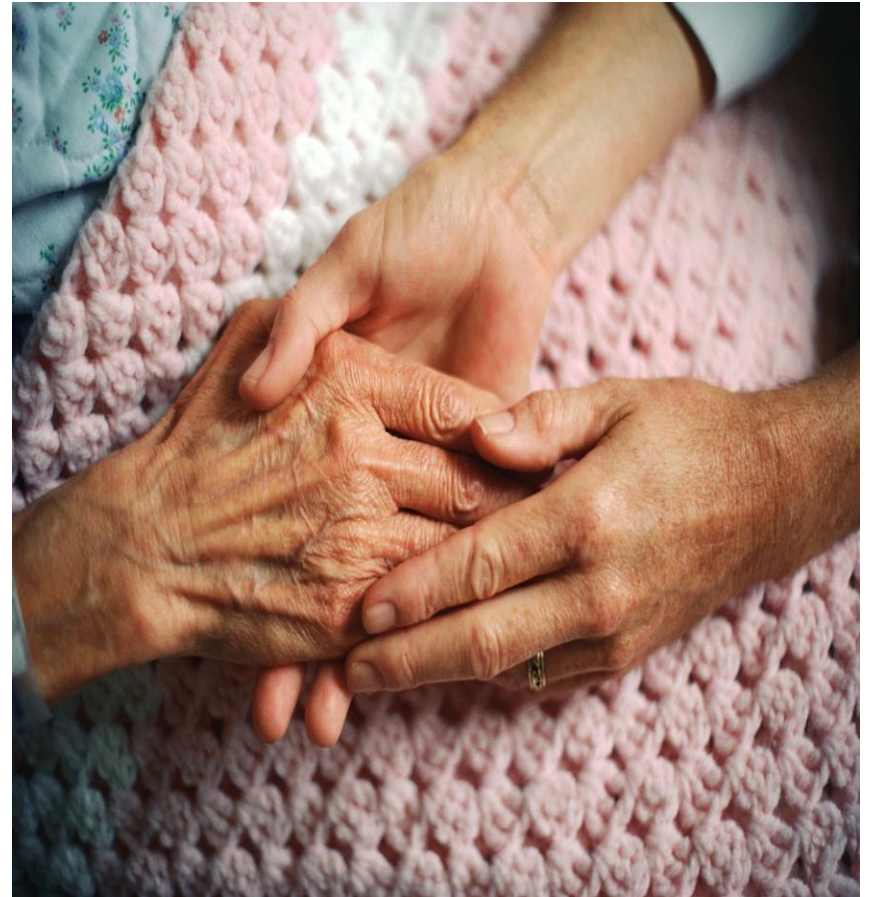
# When You Leave the Hospital

- Be sure you have all the information you need.
- Know how to take your medications.
- Know your warning signs of a worsening condition.
- Remember that you won't be able to do all of the same things you did before you became ill.
- Even if it's hard to ask for help, do it. Ask for help.



# Practice Home Safety

- Make changes in your home.
- Identify places where you might need extra help like the bathroom or the kitchen.
- Beware of tripping and slipping hazards.
- Arrange for help at home.



# You may need a helping hand...

There are many community agencies ready to help you and your caregiver:

- ***Senior Information and Assistance: 206-448-3110 or toll free at 1-888-435-3377.***



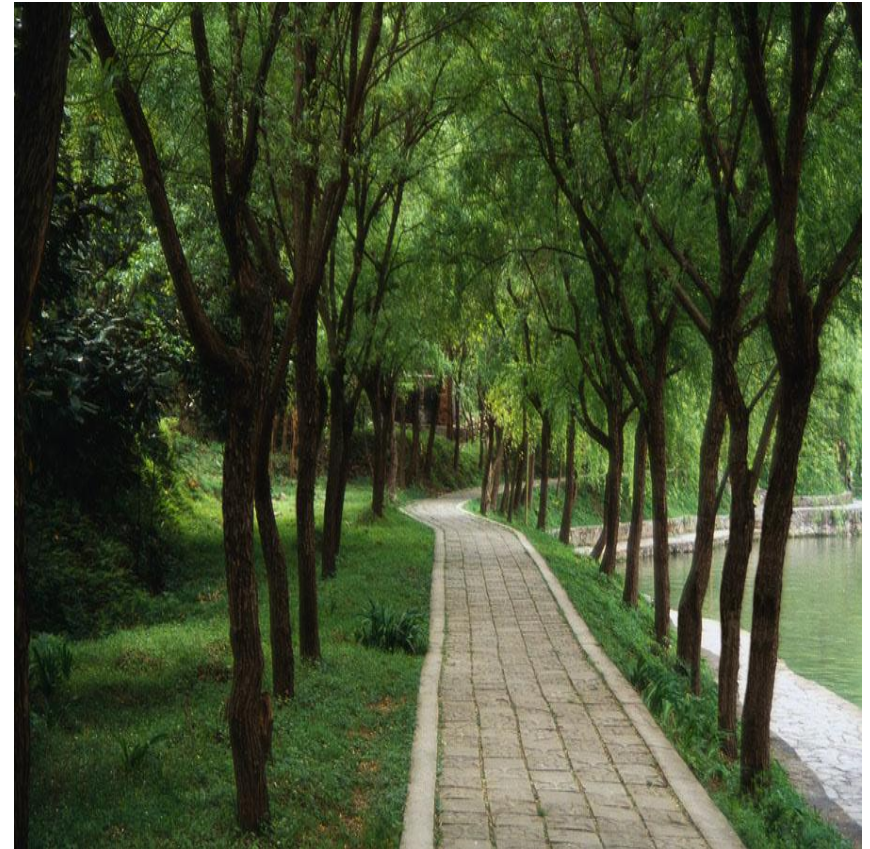
# Helpful tips

- Have a plan and be prepared.
- Begin your personal health record today.
- Make sure your medication list is updated and always keep it in your wallet or purse.
- Talk to your family and friends about who can be your advocate to help you when you become ill.
- You'll need to speak up. Remember you're the expert about your own body.
- Prepare ahead. Pack your "Going to the Hospital" bag and include these items:
  - Your current medication list
  - Your written health record
  - Phone numbers of family and friends
  - Warm socks!



# Stepping Stones of Safe Discharge

- Know your medications.
- Understand your warning signs.
- Make a follow-up appointment with your doctor.
- Keep a personal health record.





# More Resources

- CMS Discharge Checklist: <http://www.medicare.gov/Publications/Pubs/pdf/11376.pdf>
- Next Steps in Care: [http://nextstepincare.org/Caregiver\\_Home/](http://nextstepincare.org/Caregiver_Home/)

The Northwest Regional Council contributed content to this collaborative community presentation with input from patients, caregivers, physicians, Stepping Stones coaches, the Health Ministries Network and other Whatcom County partners. This material is based on Care Transition concepts by Dr. Eric Coleman, UCHSC, HCPR. Shared with you by the Bellevue Network on Aging.

