

# Your Hospital Stay

*“Likewise the spirit helps us in our weakness... We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him...” Romans 8: 26-28*

A hospital stay can be an overwhelming, and perhaps even frightening experience. Health care has become quite complex, as well as quite expensive. As Groucho Marx said, “A hospital bed is a parked taxi with the meter running.” My own grandmother always referred to the ICU as the “expensive care unit.” To top it off, a trip to the hospital almost always increases our fears and anxieties, and is generally thought of as a good place to avoid. However, most of us have to enter a hospital sooner or later for a surgery, illness, or procedure, so it pays to know all the facts that will make that experience more comfortable and satisfying.

When planning a visit or stay at a hospital, come prepared. You must bring a complete list of the medications you take, (including over the counter drugs and herbal supplements), and know your entire health history. You may believe that your doctor already knows this, but doctors typically have hundreds of patients, and cannot remember every detail of your health history. Also, you will probably be seen by many doctors during your stay, especially if it is a teaching hospital. The quality of your care will be greatly increased when the hospital has your complete health history.

When you are planning what to bring along, remember most hospitals require a photo ID, and your insurance card. You may want your own toothbrush and deodorant. Just as important as the list of things to bring is the list of things **not** to bring. This includes all jewelry—even your wedding ring. The hospital cannot be responsible for any valuables, and jewelry isn’t allowed in the operating room or the MRI machine. Leave all credit cards, checkbooks, cell phones, and cash over \$20 at home. Trying to safeguard these items while you are in the hospital places an unnecessary burden on you. Bring as little as possible to make your stay comfortable.

The best outcomes are experienced by patients who know what to expect ahead of time. For surgeries, ask questions of your physician before you leave the office. If you are being referred to a surgeon by your primary care doctor, insist on meeting him or her ahead of time. Many patients are meeting their surgeon for the first time minutes before their surgery! Find out how big the incision will be, how much pain you should expect and how it will be controlled, and when you will be able to go about your daily activities without restrictions. If there is a chance you will need blood and want to donate your own, these arrangements must be completed at least two weeks before your surgery so your body has time to regenerate your blood to ideal levels.

Protect yourself from infection! If you have any type of infection or fever, elective surgeries should be canceled until you recover. Don’t be embarrassed to ask your nurse or doctor if they have washed their hands before they touch you. If they are wearing gloves, did you see them put on a fresh pair? Health care workers can be in a hurry or get distracted like anyone else, so it’s your job to protect yourself. If you ask nicely, no one should be offended. Hand washing is the **#1** deterrent against intra-hospital infections! Few of us can go through life without entering a

hospital for treatment at some time. By being informed and prepared, you can increase your chances for a positive and successful hospital stay.

Check out the following websites:

<http://www.webmd.com> (search taking charge of your hospital stay)

[http://www.avancen.com/pdf/avancen\\_55\\_tips.pdf](http://www.avancen.com/pdf/avancen_55_tips.pdf)