

Workbook: Asthma

Research has shown that patients who take an active role in their health care get better results. This workbook is meant to help you understand what to expect during your stay in the hospital so you can take an active role in your care. You should feel confident asking your doctor about any questions you may have regarding your treatment plan.

The information covers a usual hospital stay for a patient with this condition. You may have certain issues that require your hospital stay to be increased, or you may be sent home sooner if you are doing well.

In This Guide:

Ensure a Safe Hospital Stay	2
The Day of Admission	3
The Next Few Days	4
Caring for Yourself at Home	5
When to Call a Doctor	6
Personal Information	6



Ten Steps You Can Take to Make Sure Your Hospital Stay Is a Safe One

- 1 Make sure that your doctors and nurses know about every medicine you are taking. This should include prescription and over-the-counter medicines, and supplements such as vitamins and herbs. Let them know if you have recently taken any blood thinners such as aspirin, Coumadin, Bufferin, Motrin or ibuprofen. If you have recently stopped taking such medicines, tell the doctor or nurse the date on which these medicines were stopped.
- 2 Make sure your doctors and nurses know about any allergies and reactions you have had to foods and medicines. Let your doctor and nurse know if you have any tendency to bleed or if you bruise easily.
- 3 Always make sure that you fully understand the information about your tests and treatments. Ask questions if you do not understand!
- 4 You should ask all health care workers who have direct contact with you if they have washed their hands. Research has shown that 30 percent to 50 percent of infections that patients have while in the hospital can be prevented by handwashing. Handwashing is the single best way to prevent the spread of bacteria. This is a very simple plan with really important results!
- 5 You or your family should learn as much as possible about your condition by talking to your nurses and doctors and reading medical information.
- 6 Always be sure you know who is providing care to you. You should expect hospital staff members to be wearing identification badges (preferably photo ID) and to introduce themselves and their roles before they provide care.
- 7 Before you undergo any procedure, your doctor will explain what will be done and ask you to sign a consent form. It is very important for you and your doctor to discuss the plan thoroughly and for you to agree to it, so you know exactly what will happen to you. Make sure you understand the benefits and the risks of any procedures or treatments that you are going to have.
- 8 Ask your doctors or nurses about the results of any tests or procedures that you have had, and if and how those results change the plan for your care.
- 9 When you are ready to go home, ask your doctors and nurses to explain the home treatment plan for you in detail and in words you can understand. This includes information about your medicines, caring for any incisions or wounds and finding out when you can get back to your usual activities.
- 10 When you are prescribed new medicines, ask for written information and make sure you understand the following things:
 - What is the medicine for?
 - How should I take it and for how long?
 - What should I do if I forget a dose?
 - What side effects can this medicine cause?
 - Is this medicine safe to take with the other medicines and supplements that I am presently taking?
 - What other safety measures should I follow while using this medicine?
 - What storage conditions are required for this medicine?

What To Expect On The Day You Are Admitted

- It is important to determine the exact cause of your shortness of breath. Several tests may be conducted in the emergency room or on the patient care unit. These include a test of your breathing, your oxygen level, a sputum sample, and some blood tests. A chest x-ray may be done.
- Knowing how many times a night you have awakened over the past week will help your doctors understand your recent asthma history.
- You may receive oxygen, if needed. This may be through an oxygen mask or small plastic prongs that rest just inside your nose.
- An intravenous (IV) line may be needed for you to receive steroids and other medicines.
- You may receive medicine treatments by inhalation every four hours. This may be given by a metered-dose inhaler (MDI) or by a nebulizer, which generates a mist that you inhale by a facemask or by a mouthpiece connected to a tube.
- An antibiotic medicine may be ordered if there is concern that you may have an infection.
- You may be able to get out of bed as tolerated and have your regular diet.

Key Activities:

- You may get your steroid medicines by mouth instead of intravenously (by IV).
- You may have more breathing and blood tests to determine if you are ready to go home.
- In anticipation of your going home, write a list of questions you may have for your doctor or nurse and make certain that you receive answers that you understand.
- It is essential that you discuss these issues with your nurse and respiratory therapist before you go home:
 - How to use your inhaler correctly.
 - How to gradually decrease your steroid medicines when you are home.
 - Know how to recognize the early warning signs of asthma and how to reduce or avoid those factors that trigger your symptoms.
 - Know the risk of overusing your inhaler.
 - Knowing when to seek care.

What You Must Learn Before You Go Home

- Make sure that you understand your treatment plan.
- If you have any questions, ask your doctor.

Note:

Your doctor may provide a peak flow meter for you to have at home to monitor your lung function.

Also, be sure to schedule a follow-up office visit with your doctor.

Self Care

- It is very important to take all of the doses of your medicines that your doctor orders. You will probably begin to feel better before you have completed your antibiotic medicines or steroid medicines, but it is important that you finish the course of your medicines as directed by your doctor.
- It is important that you follow your doctor's orders to decrease the dose of medicine gradually until it is no longer necessary to take the medicine. NEVER stop taking steroid medicine abruptly.
- Talk to your doctor if you are worried about your ability to pay for the medicines. If you are able to pay for the medicines but you can't get to the pharmacy to buy the medicines, your doctor may help you identify a plan so that you will be able to get your medicines.
- Make sure that you understand your new medicines. When learning about new medicines, make sure you understand the following things:
 - What is the medicine for?
 - How should I take it and for how long?
 - What should I do if I forget a dose?
 - What side effects can this medicine cause?
 - Is this medicine safe to take with the other medicines and supplements that I am presently taking?
 - What other safety measures should I follow while using this medicine?
 - What storage conditions are required for this medicine?
 - Ask for written information about the new medicine.
- Avoid those things that you know cause your asthma to flare up.
- Albuterol may be used every four hours to treat symptoms. Call your doctor if you need it four times in one day or it does not seem to take away your symptoms.
- Take your corticosteroid inhaler every day, even when you feel well.
- You may resume your normal activity level.
- Remember to keep all follow-up office appointments.

When to Call a Doctor

- You are waking up at night with asthma symptoms.
- Your symptoms are not relieved by albuterol.
- If you are taking more than eight puffs of your albuterol inhaler in one day.
- If there is a change in the color of your sputum.
- If your peak flow drops more than 20 percent from the usual and it does not come back to the usual with your albuterol inhaler.

Personal Information

Specialist: _____

Phone #: _____

Family Doctor: _____

Phone #: _____

Appointments!

Who: _____

Who: _____

When: _____

When: _____

Where: _____

Where: _____

Time: _____

Time: _____

Who: _____

Who: _____

When: _____

When: _____

Where: _____

Where: _____

Time: _____

Time: _____

Who: _____

Who: _____

When: _____

When: _____

Where: _____

Where: _____

Time: _____

Time: _____