

Be aware of hospitals and dementia

Hospitals provide very important care to people with serious illness. However, for people living with dementia, they can be very challenging places. No one is ever admitted to a hospital because they have dementia. Rather, they get admitted because there is a new or chronic underlying health condition that creates the need for this type of care. Hospitals specialize in care of people with cardiac diseases, cancer, diabetes, orthopedic conditions etc. They lack in expertise in dementia. Very little training is provided to health care professionals about Alzheimer's disease/related dementia. The hospital setting itself is not conducive to keeping the person with dementia comfortable due to numerous staff frequently coming in and out of rooms, use of strange machines, alarms going off and little room for the family to sit and keep their loved one comfortable.

People living with dementia who get admitted to hospitals often become even more confused during their stays. With added confusion, their ability to follow instructions and stay safe (e.g. asking for help to go to the bathroom). Caregivers play an essential role in ensuring the person with dementia stays safe and comfortable while in the hospital. Even during the COVID crisis, some hospitals will allow for the caregiver to stay with their loved one.

Here are some important tips:

- Before you go, inquire with the doctor if the care that is needed can be delivered at home instead.
- You are the voice of your loved one – especially when there is added confusion. Let your voice be heard by the medical team.
- Don't expect them to understand dementia. Teach them what you think they need to know about your loved one; how to approach, what to call them, where they need assistance, etc.
- When possible, plan to stay with the person at all times. There are too many things that can happen without a companion present.
- Don't be afraid to assist your loved one to eat and drink (unless it is restricted).
- Bring along pleasant distractions for your loved one. Remember not to have the TV running continually as this will add to the growing confusion.

Here is a [checklist](#) of things you should use to prepare for a hospital stay. This comprehensive [guide](#) will give you added tips. As caregivers, you know that preparation is best. Think through what you might need to do should hospitalization take place.