Ask someone who has endured a major hospitalization when they were most stressed, they’ll likely tell you that it was when they were sent home. Transitioning from a controlled environment surrounded by professionals, to the home setting can be scary, and sometimes unsafe. Unfortunately, many patients go home only to be readmitted to the hospital when things go wrong at home. We believe going home from the hospital should not be so stressful for the patient or their families. Here are some reasons hospital discharge is a vulnerable time for a patient:

- **Discharged too early:** Perhaps the patient’s pain is not well controlled with pain pills or they are not able to eat or drink well enough to maintain hydration. These are red flags that they are not ready to cope at home. If you or a loved one feel you are being discharged from the hospital too early for your safety, **speak up and be specific** about your concerns.

- **Patients should be seen by a doctor for** follow-up **after their hospitalization within 2 weeks.** Make sure your appointment is scheduled before you leave the hospital!

- **Medication errors:** New prescriptions often follow a hospitalization. People are often confused about which medications to start and which to continue or discontinue. Good discharge programs have a nurse, pharmacist or doctor compare what you were taking BEFORE your hospitalization to the prescriptions you AFTER your hospitalization. Those **lists should be compared** and any questions you have should be answered before you leave the hospital.

- **Communication:** Often patients are too tired or overwhelmed to hear and understand their instructions for going home. Not only should a family member or caregiver be there with you when you are getting your instructions, they should be **written down in a clear and easy to read manner.** In addition, your regular doctor should receive a summary of your hospitalization within a few days of discharge. Unfortunately, neither of these things happen as often as they should. You should clarify any instructions with your hospital team before you walk (or get wheeled) out the door.

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