

Key Questions at Admission

Since patients are not feeling well on admission, admission assessments may be difficult. Only essential questions should be asked.

1. Tell me why you are in the hospital?
2. Have you been hospitalized with these symptoms before?
3. Who brought you to the hospital?
4. Can you tell me all the medications (prescriptions, over-the-counter, herbal products, dietary supplements) that you are using?

Action: Reconcile patient's medications

Key Questions during the Hospital Stay

Possible barriers to ensuring that a patient can obtain and take their medications as prescribed and follow other self-care advice should be identified in advance. Asking the patient "key questions" during the hospital stay and documenting them in the patient's record can help patients receive the appropriate care and resources they need to follow their treatment regimen.

1. How will you get your medications? Do you need assistance picking them up? Is there someone at home or in your community who can help you with obtaining your medications?
2. How do you plan on paying for medications?
3. How do you organize your medications (e.g., pillbox)?
4. Do you need help to understand how to take your medications?

Action: Conduct health literacy assessment

1. How and when will you take your prescribed medications (i.e., dosage, frequency, with or without food)?
2. How long will you be taking these medications?
3. What side effects could occur? What should you do if they do occur?
4. How will you change your diet to support a healthier lifestyle?

Action: Reconcile patient's medications

1. Who cooks for you?
2. When you eat out at restaurants what do you typically order?
3. Describe the types of foods you like to snack on?
4. Do you need help to understand how to read a food label and select foods low in sodium?
5. In general, are you generally thirsty and like to quench your thirst during the day?
6. Do you own a scale?
7. Can you read your weight on your scale?
8. Describe the types of physical activity (and exercise) you participated in before your hospitalization?

Action: Consider a dietitian consult. Demonstrate how to read labels (use real cans and boxed foods). Demonstrate how to monitor fluid intake and measure the amount ingested per day, as required. Walk with patient in the hallway each day during the hospitalization, and increase speed or distance every day. Use a walker or cane as needed for stability. Encourage physical activity.

Key Questions at Discharge

Educating patients on prescribed medications (dose, type, frequency, side effects), and how and when to take them, and other self-care actions (diet, fluid management and activity/exercise) should be an essential part of the discharge process. Using visual aids such as a medication tracker, pillbox, and pictures can help patients better understand their medication plan. Asking patients/caregivers “key questions” at discharge can ensure they understand their treatment plan.

1. Tell me what medicines you will be taking and what they are for.
2. What medicines will you stop taking?
3. Which medications have had a change in how you take them?
4. How do you plan on remembering to take your medications?
5. What do you do if you forget to take a medication at the indicated time?
6. If you have any questions about your medication, who should you contact?
7. How will you be getting your medications? How soon will you be getting them?
8. How will you be paying for your medications?
9. Will you be able to take these medications as directed?
10. Tell me who will manage food shopping and cooking for you?
11. Tell me how you choose restaurants and other meals when you are not at home?
12. Describe the best snacks that are low in sodium?
13. What are the two parts of a food label that provide details about how much sodium is contained in the food?
14. Describe ways to quench your thirst without drinking fluids?
15. Describe your activity plan once you get home?
16. Describe one way to know when you are being too active or not active enough?

Action: Reconcile patient’s medications, diet, fluid needs and activity/exercise with the healthcare provider’s orders.