

Hospitalizations

Can I avoid going to the hospital?



Yes! There are definitely ways to possibly avoid going to the hospital. However, if you feel very sick, you may still need to go to the emergency room.

- Generally, before you get very sick, there are warning signs (also called “red flags”) that show that something is going wrong. For example, a new or worsening cough, or unusual difficulty doing your usual activities.
- Your primary care provider (PCP) can tell you what the warning signs or red flags are for your particular medical condition. He or she can also tell you what you should do when you see those warning signs.
- If you notice red flags early enough, sometimes you can go to see your PCP or an urgent care center instead of going to the emergency room. Urgent care centers are good places to go for an immediate health problem when you can’t see your regular PCP. They offer appointments on short notice in a more pleasant atmosphere and at far lower cost than a hospital emergency room.
- If you are having difficulty getting to your PCP’s office regularly, you can ask your ICS care manager to connect you with a visiting doctor program, where the doctor will come to your home instead.

To find out more about joining Independence Care System, just call us at 1.877.ICS.2525 or visit us at www.icsny.org.

A New York City nonprofit, Independence Care System supports adults with physical disabilities and chronic conditions to live at home and participate fully in community life.

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What if I do get hospitalized?

If you do end up going to the hospital, here are a few tips:

What to bring to the hospital:

- A list of your medicine or the actual medicine bottles.
- Your Medicaid and ICS cards. If you have Medicare, bring that card too!
- Your primary care provider's information, including the phone numbers.
- A copy of your advance directives and health care proxy if you have these.

What to ask when you are in the hospital:

- Why am I in the hospital?
- What new medicines are you giving me and why?
- What tests do I need to have and why?
- How are you going to treat my medical problem?

Tips for discharge:

You should see a doctor within a week of going home to review any changes in your medical conditions and medicines. This doctor can be either your primary care provider (PCP) or a specialist, such as a cardiologist for heart problems. You should bring any papers from the hospital with you so the doctor can understand why you were in the hospital.

Sometimes a hospital will send you home with new medicine. This new medicine could replace one or more medicines you were taking at home before you went to the hospital.

Sometimes the doctors change the dose of the medicine. Always tell your PCP about any changes to your medication.

What to do while you are in the hospital:

- Call your ICS care manager right away to let them know you are in the hospital.
- Tell a doctor or nurse about all of your medical problems or conditions, even if you think they are not part of the reason you are in the hospital.
- Tell a doctor or nurse about any medicines you take at home. This includes herbs, vitamins, and over-the-counter medicines.
- Doctors and nurses should speak with you in words you understand. Tell your doctor or nurse if you do not understand what they tell you. Ask questions about your care and your medicines and keep asking until you understand all of their answers.
- Tell your doctor or nurse if you want a family member or friend to help you understand your medical conditions or to help with making decisions.
- Tell your doctor or nurse if you have advanced directives or a health care proxy who can make medical choices for you if you are unable to.

What to ask when you are coming home from the hospital:

- What signs can I look for that tell me my medical problem is getting better?
- What signs can I look for that tell me my medical problems are getting worse?
- What should I do when I see those signs?
- Which doctor should I follow up with next and when should I see them?
- Did you change any of my medicine? Should I stop taking any medicine I was taking at home?
- Do I need additional supports (such as home care, special equipment, visiting nursing care) in order to go home? Will the hospital arrange these or will ICS (my managed long-term care plan) need to assist in those arrangements?

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