

Tips to avoid return trip to the hospital

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Understand instructions, ask questions, follow through with treatment, expert says.

(HealthDay) —More than 1 million Americans end up back in the hospital just weeks after they're discharged, and many of those readmissions are preventable, according to an expert from Columbia University School of Nursing in New York City.

Patients can do their part to avoid return trips to the hospital by simply paying attention and speaking up when it's time to go home, advised Mary Donovan-Johnson, program director of the Acute Care Nurse Practitioner Program.

"Discharges are often rushed and patients may be overwhelmed during this stressful time," Donovan-Johnson said in a Columbia news release. "If you don't understand something a medical provider said, don't be afraid to ask your doctor or nurse to repeat the instructions... Ask the

person accompanying you home to listen and take notes when instructions are being explained by your medical team."

Other steps you can take to reduce the odds of [readmission](#) after discharge include:

- Get all discharge instructions and information in writing, including directions for wound care, medications and food restrictions. Keep these instructions in a place where they are easily accessed.
- After discharge, follow through on your treatment by filling prescriptions and taking medications as directed. If you have questions about your medications or other instructions, call your doctor.
- Schedule follow-up visits with your doctor and blood tests or other procedures as directed, and keep those appointments.

"Ideally, the same team of doctors and nurses who worked with the patient would discharge them since they know the protocol in their medications, wound care, and how to set up the safest environment at home for them. But unfortunately, that doesn't always happen," Donovan-Johnson said. "So the patient needs to be vigilant about being an active participant in their recovery."

More information: Get more hospital discharge tips from the [U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](#).

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