

Medications: 10 Tips

For the best hospital care for your loved one

When your loved one is in the hospital, there's a lot to manage. Just keeping track of medications can be overwhelming. The more you know, the easier and better the hospital stay will be.

But it's hard to know what questions to ask.

Here are 10 examples of what you can say to doctors and nurses to help a loved one (your mother, for example) manage medications in the hospital:

1. I'm the family caregiver. I'll be helping my mother understand her medications.

You know your mother best and can tell doctors and nurses when something seems wrong or unusual after taking medications.

2. What's the best way for me to get information about my mother's medications, especially any changes?

When you know all the medications your mother is taking and why, you can help make sure they're working as expected and talk about how to handle any side effects.

3. Here's a schedule of my mother's medications, vitamins, and herbs from home. Could you please put this information in her hospital record?

See if your mother is getting the same medications she took at home. If they're different, ask why and talk about what makes sense.

4. My mother is allergic to penicillin. Is that noted in her record? Is there a wristband she can wear?

Drug allergies can cause serious health problems. Ask if all allergies, including food allergies, are in your mother's record.

5. My mother is being treated for depression. But she hasn't taken her regular medications as often as she should.

It's easier to manage medications and other conditions when depression is under control.

6. My mother drinks a lot of wine every day. Does that affect her medications?

Your loved one may need more anesthesia during surgery or pain medication afterward. A doctor may use a different amount of a drug for a patient who drinks a lot of alcohol.

7. What if the pain medication doesn't make the pain go away? Can my mother get a stronger medication?

You don't want your mother to be in pain while waiting for a nurse to call the doctor for more pain medication. Ask for "standing orders" for a stronger medication to be available if needed. Pain is easier to control when it's still mild.

8. What are common side effects of each medication? What should I look for, and when should I tell a doctor or nurse there could be a problem?

Side effects can cause falls, confusion, constipation (trouble moving bowels), and more.

9. My mother just moved from the emergency room to this floor, and I want to make sure her medications are still the same.

It's important to check for new, changed, or missing medications, especially when changing floors or going home. If there's been a change, ask questions until everyone agrees the medications make sense.

10. My mother will be taking a new medication at home. Can I get the prescription the day before she leaves the hospital? Is there a cheaper drug that works as well?

Have a supply of medications at home before leaving the hospital. (The hospital may have free samples.) Be sure you know who to call with questions, even at night or on weekends.

Most important, when something doesn't seem right, ask questions until everything makes sense. Write down the medication instructions, dose, and schedule. That way you can check later if you can't remember what a doctor said or to see when a medication was added or changed.

For more information about how to make a difference for a loved one in the hospital, contact us at 201.207.5602 or beth@caregivingpathways.com.

Download our free family caregiver guide to managing the hospital stay at caregivingpathways.com/get-guide.

