

Queensland Health

Going to hospital

A guide to help you feel safe and supported



Queensland
Government



Going to hospital can be a stressful time

It's normal to ask lots of questions

Every hospital is different, but this guide gives you information that is the same for all Queensland Health hospitals. It provides guidance on what to do to stay safe and be comfortable in hospital. This guide includes:

- How to be involved in your care
- How family, carers, and significant others can be involved in your care
- How to feel comfortable to ask questions
- How to raise a concern.

This guide is available online. Scan the QR code or go to <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/services/hospital-care/going-to-hospital> for more information.

Getting ready

If you know you're going to hospital, your doctor or another member of hospital staff will let you know if there is anything you need to do before you arrive. This could include:

- changing what you eat and drink before you come to hospital
- getting some tests done
- knowing when to arrive and where to go.

Hospitals are big, so if you can, check out a map of the hospital you're going to so you know where you're going. You can find information about every Queensland Health Hospital and Health Service at <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/services>

You can also find hospital parking and information about when people can visit you. Sometimes you can only have visitors at special times, or only a small number of people can visit you at a time. This is for your and other patients' safety and so you can get enough rest.

1. Turn on your camera
2. Scan QR code
3. Click image



What to bring

It's important to pack things you use every day at home

Essential items

- **Personal aids** – glasses, dentures, hearing aids, a walking stick or frame and assistive communication tools if you use them.
- **All your medications** – including vitamins, minerals and lotions, eye drops. If you are not sure, it is best to bring it. Also bring a list of everything you take.
- **Documents for this hospital admission** – reports, letters, test results and your Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme Form (if eligible).
- **Your identification (ID) documents** – Medicare card, Pension card, Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) card, private health fund details.
- **A copy of planning documents** – your Advance Care Plan, Advance Health Directive and Enduring Power of Attorney if you have these.
- **Phone numbers** – of your next of kin and any other important people.

Optional items

- Comfortable, loose clothing (enough for a few nights), a jumper in case you get cold and non-slip shoes.
- All toiletries and sanitary products, including ear plugs and a mask if you find them helpful. Hospitals have some basic supplies, but bringing your own can make you feel more comfortable.
- Your phone charger.
- Things to keep you entertained – books, magazines, iPad or laptop, headphones or earbuds (so you won't disturb your neighbour).
- For children staying in hospital, bring favourite toys, nappies, feeding needs and any special items.
- Small amounts of money or cards for cafes and vending machines.

There's not a lot of space in hospital, so only bring what you really need. If you can, organise for a friend or family member to help with washing your clothes if you'll be in hospital for more than a few nights.

You cannot smoke in Queensland Health hospitals or within 5 metres of the hospital boundary. Talk to your doctor or hospital staff about what you can do to help with cravings, like nicotine replacements. For information on how to quit, call Quitline on 13 78 48 or visit <https://www.quit.org.au>

Leave jewellery, other valuables and large amounts of money at home. We cannot ensure the safety of any personal items or replace them if lost.



What we need to know about you

When you first arrive, it's important you tell us:

- your allergies or reactions – to medications, tapes or dressings and foods
- any contagious or infectious diseases you've been exposed to
- if you are having any type of treatment we should know about (like chemotherapy)
- about any recent trips overseas
- if you are a victim-survivor of domestic violence
- any spiritual care or religious needs
- if you need help with the English language or communication (including if you need an interpreter – interpreter services are free)
- if you are an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person, and if you'd like to talk with a liaison officer
- any special assistance you need, if you have a disability (and a Julian's Key Health Passport you would like to share with us), or special requirements to do with your health
- about your Advance Health Directive, Advance Care Plan or Enduring Power of Attorney if you have them
- if you have a carer or support worker
- if you think your phone number or address have changed.

If you're a family member or carer, you may be asked to answer some of these questions on behalf of your loved one.

Let hospital staff know who you would like us to contact about your care, including in an emergency. This can be more than one person.

If there is anyone you do or do not want us to talk to about your health – we take your privacy and confidentiality seriously and must follow the Australian law.



During your stay

A hospital ward is different to where you live. Hospital staff will tell you information about the ward and what to expect. If you do not know something, please ask.

How to BE SAFE

You might have to do things differently while you're in hospital.

When you arrive, we will give you an identification bracelet. Staff will ask you many times to tell them who you are (your identity). This is to make sure the right person is receiving the right treatment.

If you've had surgery, are feeling unwell or have changed medications, you might have an increased risk of falling. A fall can happen to anyone in hospital, but the below information can help you reduce the risk.

You can read more about being safe [here](#).

BE SAFE	
Buzzer	Know how to contact hospital staff using the buzzer. Ask for assistance and wait for help.
Environment	Familiarise yourself with the room, including the bathroom, lighting and furniture.
Shoes	Bring and wear low-heeled, non-slip shoes that fit well.
Ask	For assistance, especially when getting in and out of bed, putting on your footwear, walking using mobility aids and using the bathroom.
Fluids	Drink plenty of water, unless your fluid intake is limited (staff will tell you this).
Educate	Learn about balance, strength and exercise and when you may need help. Tell the hospital staff if you have problems with your sight or with walking.

Be safe from a blood clot and pressure injury

- A blood clot is a gel-like clump of blood. When it happens in a blood vessel, it can be dangerous. They can happen when you cannot move and change positions normally.
You may need to have a regular injection to prevent blood clots.
- A physiotherapist may ask you to do exercises to help you with movement or breathing.

Pressure injuries are a type of skin injury like ulcers or bedsores. They can happen when you cannot move and change positions normally.

- Tell us if you have had a pressure injury before.
- Tell your nurse immediately if your skin feels any heat, pain or discomfort.
- Change your position often.
- Sit out of bed and walk as often as you can safely (unless you have been told not to).
- Drink plenty of water (unless told not to).
- Use compression stockings and/or alternative mechanical devices if you are given these.

To avoid infections, wash your hands often. This is to help prevent the spread of illness.





Your rights

The Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights is for everyone. It describes what you, or someone you care for, can expect when receiving health care in Australia. This includes all Queensland Health hospitals.

Access

- Healthcare services and treatment that meets your needs.

Safety

- Safe and high-quality health care that meets national standards.
- Be cared for in an environment that is safe and makes you feel safe.

Respect

- Be treated as an individual, and with dignity and respect.
- Have your culture, identity, beliefs and choices recognised and respected.

Partnership

- Ask questions and be involved in open and honest communication.
- Make decisions with your healthcare provider, to the extent that you choose and are able to.
- Include the people that you want in planning and decision making.

Information

- Clear information about your condition, the possible benefits and risks of different tests and treatments, so you can give informed consent.
- Receive information about services, waiting times and costs.
- Be given assistance, when you need it, to help you to understand and use health information.
- Access to your health information.
- Be told if something has gone wrong during your health care, how it happened, how it may affect you and what is being done to make your care safe.

Privacy

- Have your personal privacy respected.
- Have information about you and your health kept secure and confidential.

What to do if something doesn't feel right

Tell staff immediately if you (or your loved one):

- are in pain or discomfort
- feel the condition is getting worse or something just 'doesn't feel right'
- have any concerns about the quality of care.



Don't wait – acting early can make all the difference.



Ryan's Rule

We understand that you and your carers know you better than anyone.

If you have concerns that your health condition is getting worse and you are worried, please ask for help. Ryan's Rule is one way of doing this.

How to get help using Ryan's Rule

Step 1	Talk to a nurse or doctor if your health condition has worsened and you are worried
Step 2	If after Step 1 you are still worried, ask to speak to the nurse in charge.
Step 3	After doing Steps 1 and Steps 2, you are not satisfied and you are feeling no better, call 13HEALTH on 13 43 25 84 and ask for a Ryan's Rule Review.

If you're a family member, significant other or carer, you can also ask for a Ryan's Rule on your loved one's behalf.

Once Ryan's Rule is asked for, a nurse or doctor will do a clinical review of the patient and their treatment.

For more information on Ryan's Rule, including translated resources, visit <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/support/shared-decision-making/ryans-rule>

Giving feedback

You can provide feedback or make a complaint and it won't affect the way you are treated. We encourage you to share your experiences to help us improve the quality of care and health services.

Providing feedback is not just for the person receiving care. As a patient's carer, significant other or family member, your concerns are just as important to us.

When you leave hospital, you may be asked to complete a survey called the 'patient reported experience measures survey' or PREMs. This survey will ask you about the care you received and helps us find out what we are doing well and what can be improved.

To give a compliment or make a complaint, please talk to a nurse, doctor or other staff member or visit <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/contacts/complaints>

Find out more about patient rights by visiting <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/publications-and-resources/resource-library/understanding-my-healthcare-rights-guide-consumers>



Be involved—ask questions

When staff discuss important care information about a patient, it is called a clinical handover or patient handover. It can happen at the start or end of a staff's working shift. General information about your care may be shared at the bedside.

- Don't ever be afraid to ask a question about the care you are receiving.
- Your family, carer or significant other can also ask questions. They may ask:
 - What will recovery look like?
 - How long until they go home?
- If a treatment is suggested, you might like to ask:
 - What are my treatment options?
 - Are there any risks I need to know about?
- Do I really need this test, treatment or procedure?
- What happens if I don't do anything?
 - Where can I get more information or support?

You can ask questions about anything you are not sure about.

If you want to, you can get someone else to ask questions or advocate for you.



Leaving hospital

While you're staying in hospital, staff will discuss your discharge plans with you.

This will include information about:

- when you are likely to go home
- what needs to happen before you go home
- what supports and aides you might need at home (like wheelchairs and other mobility devices)
- any concerns you might have
- transport arrangements.

Before leaving hospital, staff may provide you with:

- details for any follow-up appointments
- a medical certificate
- a discharge summary with information about your current hospital stay
- discharge medications or a prescription for new or changed medications
- written information to help with ongoing care and any community supports you might need.

It can help to have family members and carers with you for these discussions, so everyone knows the next steps.

Please check with the hospital staff if you have ongoing health concerns or are not recovering as expected after you leave hospital.

If you feel something is wrong, or you are getting worse, return to the Emergency Department or see your usual doctor immediately.





Help making decisions

If a patient is 18 years or older, they can accept, refuse or change their mind about any medical treatment. This is only if they understand what the doctor is saying and can make reasonable choices based on this information.

Except for immediate, life-threatening emergencies, a health practitioner must get the patient's informed consent for any medical treatment they receive in hospital. Sometimes consent can be verbal or implied, and sometimes the patient will be asked to sign a form.

It is presumed every adult has capacity to make all decisions until proven otherwise. The responsibility is on the person seeking to challenge a person's decision-making capacity to prove they have impaired capacity.

The Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal or Supreme Court can make a formal declaration or finding about an adult's capacity. You may want to seek legal advice if you are unsure about an adult's capacity.

Impaired capacity

If a patient has permanently or temporarily impaired capacity, someone else may need to make certain decisions on their behalf.

An adult's ability to make decisions can vary. It can depend on the nature of their impairment, the type of decision, and whether they have other people who can support them.

A person may be able to make some health care decisions, like a minor decision about dressing a wound. They may not be able to make bigger decisions that are more complex and have greater risks.

Most hospitals have a Social Worker or Advance Care Planning Facilitator who can talk with the patient, their significant other, family, and carers if they need help with decision making. Ask to talk to them at any time.



Substitute decision makers

A substitute decision maker can make decisions for a person when they cannot make those decisions for themselves. For example, an Enduring Power of Attorney or Health Attorney. If a person has an Advance Health Directive, the name of the substitute decision maker will be listed in the document. Having an Advance Health Directive is voluntary. To learn more, visit [qld.gov.au](https://www.qld.gov.au) and search 'Making decisions for others'.

If there is not a formally appointed person to make health decisions on a person's behalf, they may be given a Statutory Health Attorney. By law, it is the first available and culturally appropriate adult from the following:

1. A spouse or de facto partner (if the relationship is close and continuing).
2. A person who is responsible for your primary care (but not a paid carer) over the age of 18.
3. A person who is a close friend or relative (but not a paid carer) who is over the age of 18.
4. When there is no one suitable or available, the Public Guardian.

Patients under 18 years of age

Usually, a parent or guardian will consent to treatments on behalf of a child or young person under 18. However, young people 16 years and over can consent for some health decisions (and even younger if they can show they have capacity to consent to the treatment). Some decisions about special medical procedures cannot be decided by a parent or guardian. These must be decided by the Court.

Further information on capacity, consent, substitute decision-making and Advanced Care Planning can be found at <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/services/hospital-care/going-to-hospital>

