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*If Veterans don't help Veterans, who will?*

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# Helping you choose: Quality hospital care



When you need care in a hospital — and it is not for an emergency — you should take time to find out some information to help you choose the best hospital for you or your loved one. Your doctor can recommend some hospitals. Talk with representatives at each hospital. The following questions can help you get the information you need.



## QUESTIONS ABOUT CARE

- Ask about the operation or treatment. How often is it performed? What are the risks?
- Will you receive written information about your operation or treatment?
- Will a care plan be created? The plan should cover the services you will receive and how long treatment will last.
- Who will be responsible for the care plan?
- How are nurses and other health care professionals updated about your care?
- How is your family updated about your care?
- Ask how your pain will be treated.
- If you need anesthesia, will you meet your anesthesiologist?
- What are the hospital's rules for visitors?
- Are family members allowed in the recovery area?
- How do they provide security? How do they protect all patients?
- What is the cost of your operation or treatment?
- Is your operation or treatment covered by your medical insurance?
- Where can you get help finding financial assistance if you need it?
- Is the hospital "accredited?" That means the hospital follows rules for patient safety and quality. Go to [Quality Check®](http://www.qualitycheck.org) at [www.qualitycheck.org](http://www.qualitycheck.org) to find Joint Commission-accredited hospitals.
- What are your rights and responsibilities? Ask for a paper copy and an explanation of your rights and responsibilities.
- Is patient information kept confidential? Is there any reason patient information is released?



## QUESTIONS ABOUT STAFF

- What is the training and background of the doctor?
- Is the doctor certified by a medical board?
- Are social workers available? What services do they provide?



## QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT EMERGENCY CARE

- Is there a 24/7 telephone number you can call if you have questions or problems? Will a doctor or nurse answer the phone? How are emergencies handled after hours?
- Is there an emergency plan? Can care still be provided if there is a power failure or natural disaster?
- Is there a plan for moving patients to another hospital if there is an emergency?



## QUESTIONS ABOUT CARE WHEN LEAVING THE HOSPITAL

- Will a discharge plan be created?
- Will you or your family be given clear instructions about your care after you leave the hospital? For example, how to change dressings and continue medicines.
- What services are available after you leave the hospital?
- Will your regular doctor be given information about your condition?



## RESOURCES

<http://www.medicare.gov/hospitalcompare/> — Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' Hospital Compare

*The Helping You Choose series is published by The Joint Commission — the largest health care accrediting body in the United States that promotes quality and safety.*