

# Planning your discharge from the hospital

A patient's guide

## **Introduction**

Being discharged is a crucial part of your experience in our hospital.

Once you are deemed well enough, you will be discharged. This simply means that our doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals looking after you feel that you are ready to safely leave our hospital.

To keep you safe and well, it's important that you don't stay in hospital longer than needed. This also helps us care for other patients who are waiting to come in.

Our teams will support you in returning home as soon as possible. You will always be involved in decisions about your care, treatment and discharge, alongside a relative, friend or carer as appropriate.

Discharge planning is an important part of your hospital stay and we aim to start this process from the day you are admitted to our hospital, to ensure that you only stay in hospital for the time you need to.

Once you are deemed appropriate to be discharged and our doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals looking after you feel that you are ready to safely leave our hospital your discharge will be arranged.

## **When will I leave Royal Papworth Hospital?**

We will tell you when your treatment is due to end, when you no longer need to stay in hospital, and when you are due to leave hospital (this is known as a 'medically fit for discharge date').

Our aim is to tell you this within 48 hours of you being admitted to the ward. We will let you know if this changes. Most people go home from hospital, and for those that do we will aim to get you home in time for

lunch. However, if you are likely to require further care after your treatment is complete, we will discuss the choices available to you. This could be to another hospital, a social care setting, or back at home with certain additional care, new equipment or adaptations.

### **Why do we try to make your stay as short as possible?**

We do this to help you recover in the best environment for your ongoing health and wellbeing.

While we think our hospital is a friendly, calm and safe place to be, it is not healthy to remain in hospital longer than you need to.

Patients who stay in hospital for a long time are more likely to lose muscle strength, have reduced mobility and independence, or develop an infection.

It also leaves fewer beds available for other people to be admitted to hospital, which contributes to increased waiting lists.

Timely discharges are therefore better for everyone and improve the quality of care we can provide to all our patients.

### **Preparing for discharge**

Before you leave hospital it is really important to begin preparing to leave hospital as soon as possible. This gives you, your family, carer or friends the time to explore options. Here is a checklist to help you work through plans.

- ☐ **Transport – please arrange to be picked up.**

Unless your team advises otherwise, please arrange your own way home from hospital.

We will give you an expected date of discharge within 48 hours of being admitted to a ward, based on what we know about your care needs at that time.

This will help you to speak to a family member, carer or friend about collecting you on that day. This date may change depending on your recovery and when it is clinically appropriate for you to leave.

You do not need to worry about an exact time at this stage. This will become clearer closer to discharge. Please keep talking to the ward staff about this, especially if you live a long way away from Cambridge.

Hospital transport is only available in rare, exceptional circumstances for patients who meet very specific eligibility criteria.

#### ☐ **Keep moving as much as you can**

We recommend you keep moving as much as you are able to during your stay in our hospital. This might simply be getting changed out of your pyjamas early in the day or getting out of bed to sit in your chair for your meals or walking outside of your room.

This will help you to maintain mobility and strength.

Please speak to your healthcare team about what is safe for you.

#### ☐ **Preparing your home**

Friends and family can also play a key role by preparing your home ready for your return.

We would recommend that they make sure there is food and drink in the house and, if it is cold, put on the heating.

#### ☐ **House keys**

Make sure you have house keys with you, if there is no-one who can let you in. Please let the team looking after you know as soon as possible if this is a problem.

#### ☐ **Appropriate clothing**

Make sure you have outdoor clothing to wear when you leave hospital.

#### ☐ **Belongings**

Please make sure you have all your belongings.

We do not recommend bringing lots of belongings into hospital. This is so that our cleaners can clean your room effectively. We also strongly advise you not to bring in any valuable items.

### ☐ **Medications**

You may have already been on medication before coming to our hospital. If you brought medication into hospital with you, please confirm with the team looking after you whether you need to continue taking these. If you do, make sure you take these medicines with you.

You will be provided with a supply of all new or changed medication before you leave.

### ☐ **Let us know if there's going to be a problem**

Please let us know as soon as possible if there is an issue with any of the above, or if you have any questions.

We can help you, but if we do not know there are problems until the day you are due to be discharged then this will likely lead to delays.

## **What will happen on your day of discharge?**

### **Be ready to leave your room early**

When you are medically fit for discharge, our ward team will support you in getting ready to leave. Ideally you will be out of your room by 10:00 on the day you are due to leave but you could be ready from as early as 08:00.

You may be taken to the discharge lounge on our ground floor so that we can prepare your room for another patient. More information on the discharge lounge can be found further on in this leaflet in the 'what is the discharge lounge' section.

### **Medicines**

Your prescription will be reviewed by a pharmacist who will check that the medication prescribed is appropriate and safe for you.

While many prescriptions are ready within three hours, processing times can vary based on workload and safety checks. Medicines are dispensed only once all necessary steps have been completed to ensure patient safety.

If you have been prescribed 10 medicines or more, or your prescription is particularly complex, then it may take our pharmacy team longer to prepare your drugs. Where possible, we will make you aware of any lengthy delays.

We aim for you to leave hospital with at least a two-week supply of medication, providing you with enough time to arrange repeat supplies from your GP.

You will be given a list of any new, ongoing, or discontinued medicines which a member of the team will go through with you.

For any queries or advice regarding your medication once you are home, you can contact the medicines helpline on:

**01223 638777**

or email us at:

**papworth.pharmacyout  
patients@nhs.net**

### **Hospital equipment**

We may lend you hospital equipment to help you at home. When you no longer need it, please return it to our hospital for other patients to use.

However, if you live far away from Royal Papworth Hospital and have no upcoming appointment date, please return it to your local hospital instead. This helps to prevent perfectly good equipment being thrown away.

### **Discharge letter**

When you leave our hospital, we will give you a discharge letter containing information about your care, treatment and medication. Your GP will

also receive a copy.

### **What is the discharge lounge?**

The discharge lounge at Royal Papworth Hospital is a comfortable, relaxing and safe nurse-led environment for patients who are waiting for the discharge process to be completed.

The discharge lounge allows patients to leave their hospital beds as early as possible while the final important safety checks are carried out before discharge. This allows us to clean your bedroom and get it ready for another patient who is waiting to be admitted for treatment.

It is based on the ground floor of our hospital.

You may be transferred to the discharge lounge by either the ward staff or the portering team from 08:00 on your day of discharge.

Our team in the discharge lounge will liaise with the ward staff, medical staff and pharmacy teams to ensure your safe discharge from hospital.

Once you have received both your discharge letter and discharge medications you are then ready to leave our hospital.

Friends or relatives are unfortunately not able to wait with you in the discharge lounge due to space restrictions. However, our team can contact your relative, carer or friend on your behalf, if needed, to support you being picked up on time.

If you require a friend or relative to sit with you to go through your medicine list and discharge plans with the discharge lounge nurse, you can ask the discharge lounge nurse to arrange this.

If you have been assessed and meet the eligibility criteria for hospital transport the ward staff will book this prior to your arrival in the discharge lounge and the crew will be made aware of your location for collection.

## **Facilities**

- The discharge lounge has comfortable seating for 12 patients.
- There are televisions and various puzzles to keep you entertained.
- Tea, coffee and cold drinks are available at any time.
- Lunch/snacks will be provided.
- Toilet facilities are nearby.

Mobile phones and other electronic devices are permitted with the use of headphones to keep the environment calm and comfortable for all.

## **Discharge to the virtual ward (discharged to your own home)**

You may be identified as being suitable to be discharged to our virtual ward. This means that we can monitor you within the comfort of your own home, without the noise or distractions of a busy hospital ward.

If you are suitable for our virtual ward, an on-boarding nurse will meet you to discuss how the ward works and, if you consent, they will demonstrate and give you, the equipment that you will go home with.

Once you have left the hospital, you will call the virtual ward to confirm your arrival home and from there you will be monitored and called daily by one of the nursing team.

When you are discharged from the virtual ward, the equipment will be collected by one of the team or you will be asked to return it at your follow up appointment.

## **Once you have left hospital Wound infection and pressure sores**

If you develop any of the following symptoms after discharge from hospital, please contact your GP promptly:

- Increased pain



- Discharge from the surgical site, such as your chest or leg (if you had surgery)
- Spreading redness
- Fever

Reduced mobility can increase the risk of developing pressure sores, both during your hospital stay and after discharge while you are regaining strength. Keeping as mobile as possible will help reduce this risk and support your recovery.

### **Blood clots**

Anyone who has stayed in hospital is at risk of developing a blood clot. Please contact your GP immediately if you have any of the following symptoms:

- Redness, pain or swelling in your legs
- Difficulty breathing or feeling faint
- Coughing up blood
- Chest pain

### **If ongoing care is required**

If you are likely to require further care or support after your treatment with us is complete, we will discuss the

choices available to you. This could be in another hospital, in social care, or back home with essential equipment or a care package in place.

With your permission, we will request assessment(s) to establish your requirements to be safely discharged from our hospital. These could be for social care support, adaptations to your home or eligibility for NHS continuing care.

It may be necessary to assess how your ongoing care is going to be funded, although often this is done after you have been discharged to avoid unnecessary delays. It is important to note that whilst the NHS is free for UK residents, social care is funded differently. Please speak to the person assessing you if you have any queries regarding this.

Once we have discussed your options for ongoing care with you, we will begin to arrange the next stage of your care. If at this point you wish to explore other options, you will

need to have this in place within 48 hours after the date you are medically fit for discharge. Our ward staff, social care team and discharge planning specialists are all available to talk to you about these plans.

If your preferred choice is unavailable when you are medically fit for discharge, an alternative, temporary option can be arranged.

You will not be able to wait in hospital once you no longer need hospital care.

### **Follow-up appointments**

You will be told if you need a follow-up appointment or any further checks at Royal Papworth Hospital in future. This will be arranged by the team looking after you.

### **Please ask questions**

We understand that being discharged from hospital can cause anxiety and concern. Our team will only discharge you when it is safe.

If you have any questions about leaving our hospital, please discuss your discharge plans with your healthcare team at any stage during your stay.

There are helpful questions you can ask throughout your treatment, such as:

- What is wrong with me?
- What treatment are you considering?
- What is going to happen this morning, this afternoon and tomorrow morning?
- If all goes to plan, and there are no complications or delays, when can I go home?
- What needs to happen for me to go home?
- How can I help to make my discharge as smooth as possible?
- How can I arrange to get the personal care I need?
- Will I be able to manage without making changes to where I live? Are there people I can contact to help make any changes?

- Where would I get equipment from and who can help and advise me on this?
- Will you make arrangements for the right people to come to see me?

## **Feedback and useful contacts**

For further information on discharge, please visit our website: [www.royalpapworth.nhs.uk/discharge](http://www.royalpapworth.nhs.uk/discharge)

### **Feedback**

We appreciate and encourage feedback. If you need advice or are concerned about any aspect of care or treatment, please speak to a member of staff or contact our patient advice and liaison service (PALS).

PALS opening times are 08:30 - 16:30 (Monday-Friday).

**Phone: 01223 638896**

**Email: [papworth.pals@nhs.net](mailto:papworth.pals@nhs.net)**

You can also call our main hospital switchboard on 01223 638000.

# Royal Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

A member of Cambridge University Health Partners



Papworth Road  
Cambridge Biomedical Campus  
CB2 0AY



[royalpapworth.nhs.uk](https://royalpapworth.nhs.uk)



01223 638000

## Alternative versions of this leaflet

Large print copies and alternative language versions of this leaflet can be made available on request.

View a digital version of this leaflet by scanning the QR code.



## Become a member

As a member of Royal Papworth Hospital Foundation Trust, you could have your say on how the organisation is run, now and in the future. You will receive regular information and news from Royal Papworth and get invited to exclusive events. Membership allows you to vote for your representatives on the Council of Governors, talk to your Council of Governor representatives and stand as a governor.



Scan the QR code or head to [royalpapworth.nhs.uk/membership](https://royalpapworth.nhs.uk/membership) to find out more.

---

|                 |                                    |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|
| Author ID:      | Chair of discharge assurance group |
| Department:     | Discharge assurance group          |
| Printed:        | October 2025                       |
| Review date:    | October 2027                       |
| Version:        | 01                                 |
| Leaflet number: | PI 277                             |