

# Having a conversation about hospital care at home



Hospital care at home is hospital-level care delivered in the comfort of a patient's own home by teams of health professionals who visit regularly. The frequency of these visits depends on the patient's care needs.

Research shows that hospital care at home delivers better health outcomes, fewer complications and a better experience for patients and their carers.

## Types of care available in the home

A range of hospital services can be delivered in patients' homes including:

- care for patients recovering from surgery
- care for patients with infections and wounds
- care for a range of chronic diseases
- geriatric care for people with medical conditions related to ageing
- rehabilitation
- cancer care
- maternity care post birth for women with low-risk deliveries
- paediatric care of medically stable children



## Benefits and reasons to recommend hospital care at home as an option

**Comfort** – hospital care in the comfort of a patient's own home where they can have their own food.

**Familiarity** – the patient gets better in their own space, surrounded by loved ones.

**Less stressful** – patients are more relaxed at home, with less noise and disruptions, and no restricted hospital visiting hours.

**Freedom and independence**, which for many people leads to a faster recovery.

**No extra costs** – patients are still an admitted patient of the hospital, and the hospital will continue to provide the professional healthcare team, equipment and resources needed to give them safe, high-quality, hospital-level care.

**Safe** – hospital care at home is only offered when it is a safe option and there are clear pathways for the patient to return to hospital if needed.

## Identified barriers and patient concerns

Consumer market research conducted in 2023 identified some key barriers and concerns for patients with receiving hospital care at home. These include:

### **Isolation and lack of monitoring**

Patients often express apprehension about being alone and the perceived lack of continuous monitoring in a home care setting.

### **Personal vulnerability**

Concerns about personal vulnerability arise, prompting patients to question their safety and wellbeing when receiving hospital care at home.

### **Self-care capability**

Patients may doubt their own capability to manage self-care effectively in a home environment, raising concerns about their ability to navigate the responsibilities associated with hospital care at home.

### **Expectations of others and family**

Patient expectations, particularly those related to the support and involvement of family members, play a role in shaping concerns about hospital care at home.

## Carer perspectives

Carers are generally positive about hospital care at home, but they also have some concerns:

### **Uncertainty about their responsibilities**

Carers often grapple with what hospital care at home will involve and the implications for their role as caregiver.

### **Increased burden**

Concerns about a potential increase in caregiving responsibilities, especially for carers who are managing work commitments or caring for other family members at the same time.

### **Communication challenges**

Carers question whether the decision for hospital care at home will be made without consulting them and whether the patient they are caring for accurately assesses their own capabilities.

## How can you respond to this?

Check whether the screening tools used in your health service cover these concerns.

Have a conversation with your patient about their concerns and develop a plan for hospital care at home.



# Five principles for positive patient and carer experiences with hospital care at home

Consumer market research reaching more than 1,300 people with questions about hospital care at home has identified five fundamental principles for ensuring positive patient and carer experiences with their care. While each patient and case will vary, integrating these five principles into your approach will strengthen communication with patients and their carers and improve uptake of hospital care at home services.

- 1. Early discussion** Start conversations about the care plan and the option of receiving care at home either early during a hospital stay or by providing communication materials in advance through emergency departments or doctors' waiting rooms. Create early awareness of hospital care at home options.
- 2. Inclusive planning** Develop the care plan collaboratively with input from clinicians, GPs, patients, families, carers, and the care team. Have comprehensive discussions to help inform a structured care plan with clearly defined goals for care at home.
- 3. Discuss support** Discuss the availability of support systems involving family, carers, and friends. In cases where no support exists, connect patients with appropriate services. Consider what other community supports the patient will need and make appropriate referrals.
- 4. Smooth transition** Support the patient's transition into home care. Ideally, this involves more frequent and extended support visits as the patient begins their care plan at home.
- 5. Escalation pathway** Establish a clear escalation pathway, ensuring patients, carers, family, and friends are aware of what steps to take in an emergency or if escalation is needed.

*By adopting these five principles, you pave the way for good patient and carer experiences of hospital care at home.*

## More information

Consumer resources and information:

[Home-based and virtual hospital care](#)

Sector resources and information:

[Better at Home initiative](#)

Encourage patients to reach out to their healthcare team or health professionals to find out more about their options.

**The Better at Home initiative is supported by the Victorian Government.**

