

Questions to Ask a Veteran's Health Care Providers

The list of questions below can help you prepare for discussions with a Veteran's health care providers (e.g., doctor visit, mental health counseling, trip to the emergency room, medical center discharge planning session, etc.) The questions are organized by category. Not all of these questions may apply to you, so select the questions that best fit yours and the Veteran's needs.

About Medical Care in General

- What might have caused this condition/illness?
- What is this condition/illness called?
- Is this condition/illness likely to go away on its own?
- Is the pain likely to diminish or go away?
- How do you want to treat this condition/illness?
- What are other ways to treat this condition/illness?
- What are the risks associated with these treatments?
- What is the likely future of this condition/illness with the recommended treatment? Without the recommended treatment?
- What is the time frame for the treatment?
- Is a hospital stay necessary?
- What is the expected recovery time?
- What lifestyle changes can we expect in the future?

About Medical Tests and Procedures

- Is the recommended test or procedure necessary to confirm or disprove a diagnosis?
- Will the findings of the test change the way the condition/illness is managed?
- What are the risks involved?
- What happens if the Veteran refuses to undergo this test?
- How expensive is the test and will it be covered by insurance?
- Will the test require a change in any of the medications the Veteran is taking?



- What are the chances of inaccurate test results?
- What is the test procedure?
- How will the test make the Veteran feel? Will it be painful?
- How should I help the Veteran prepare for this test?
- Will the Veteran need help getting home afterward?
- Who will interpret the test results?
- Will someone call with the test results or should I phone for them?
- Can test results be sent directly to me or the Veteran?

About How the Doctor's Office Works

- What days/hours is the office open?
- How are medical emergencies handled?
- When is the best time to reach the doctor by phone, fax or e-mail?
- Which method of communication does the doctor prefer?

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- Who can answer questions if the doctor is not available?
 - Who can I call after hours or when the doctor is away?

Regarding the Costs of Medical Care

- What costs are not covered by the Veteran's health benefits through VA?
- Approximately how much can I expect to pay in the long run for treatment?
- What private insurance plans do you accept?

Planning for Discharge from the Hospital/Health Care Facility

As part of the process of planning for a Veteran being discharged from a medical center or health care facility, many issues related to the Veteran's care need to be resolved. As soon as you know the Veteran you care for is going to be admitted to the hospital, find out who is in charge of the discharge process and arrange a meeting to gather specific answers to the following questions.

- Where is the Veteran going to go after discharge? (Return to the previous setting? Go someplace else temporarily? Move permanently to a new location?)
- Who will provide additional home health care if it is needed?
- Does the Veteran need any home health equipment? What kind?
- Do physical and/or occupational therapy visits need to be arranged?
- What additional services may be needed and for how long (e.g., Meals-on-Wheels, hospice care, housekeeping)?
- What paperwork needs to be processed to get these services lined up?
- How will the added expenses be paid for?
- What additional skills do I need to learn so I can care for the Veteran properly?

Adapted, with permission, from the National Family Caregiver Association resource "Questions to Ask Your Healthcare Providers."

