

Self-care

It's up to you

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I learned that you have to ask for what you want. You are in a new role, one you haven't been in before. Speak up and ask for good care. Make sure you take good care of you.

~ Patient Advisor

Good Habits

- It is important to take good care of yourself. Attend to all aspects of your well-being – your physical, spiritual, and emotional health.
- The basics stay the same: eat right, exercise, and get plenty of rest. Avoid smoking. If you drink, do so in moderation.



It is important to do as much as you can do for yourself and to stay active.

- Staying hydrated is important, but it can be easy to forget. Try setting a goal of drinking enough water and make use of electrolyte replacement drinks.
- Keep up as many of your old friendships as you can. You are still *you*, even sick or injured.
- Do as much as you can do for yourself and stay active.
- Learn good communication skills, or improve the ones you already have. These skills will help you take good care of yourself.
- Assess whether you will need any new healthcare providers. Get regular check-ups.
- If there are personal tasks you used to do that you are no longer able to do, such as trimming your nails or shaving, arrange to have them done.
- Be proactive. Knowing what you're dealing with helps avoid accidents and embarrassment.
- You have been through a lot and could be overwhelmed by your world after discharge. Setting a schedule can help with feelings of being overwhelmed.

Planning Your Day

- You may need to learn a new level of patience. Expect that many things will take longer to do than before. You have been and will continue going through a major life event. Give yourself some grace.
- Consider using a schedule. A daily planner can help you organize your day and make it to doctor's visits, therapies, and other treatments. Not having a schedule can lead to sleep problems, missed medicines, or nutritional issues. These can affect your recovery and overall quality of life.
- Use technology to help you stay organized. You can set audible timers on your phone or computer to remind you about when to take your medicines and other important tasks.

- Ask your caregiver to come at specific and regular times. This will help you plan your day.
- Learn how to prepare people to spend time with you. Share information about your lifestyle and schedule so they can work *with* you.
- Be flexible. You may wake up with a “to do” list in your head, or even written down. Keep yourself open to changing your priorities. For example, if you have 2 tasks to do, you may need to ask yourself if you have enough energy to do both, or if you should choose to do just one.
- Know yourself. Are you a morning person or a night person? Do you have more energy and are you more alert in the morning or later in the day? Plan your day to match your energy levels.
- Be realistic. How long does it take you to get ready to go out? Do you need a caregiver to help you get ready? Observe how much time it really takes you to get ready to go out, and schedule your appointments and outings based on that.
- If you’re doing something for the first time since your discharge, ask for support from a friend or caregiver. It may be frustrating, but it’s better to be cautious than to find yourself in a challenging situation.
- It may be hard to be spontaneous in planning outings with friends. Make a point to plan some activities in advance, and arrange transportation to those events if needed.

Managing Fatigue

- Use a *mediset* (a plastic box used to hold up to a week’s worth of pills) for your medicines. You might even consider buying 2 and filling them with medicines for 2 weeks at a time. This can be a real timesaver. If you do not live with young children or have them over to your home, you may also want to try “easy-open” caps for your medicines.
- Try online grocery shopping to save your energy. Many stores offer free delivery if you spend a certain amount.

- Use online shopping and catalog shopping for buying gifts.
- Try taking a shower or being bathed right before bed, especially if it wears you out. If you must bathe early in the day, plan to take a short rest right afterward.
- You can pay bills and do your personal bookkeeping online:
 - Many banks now have online bill pay, where you can set up automatic payments for your monthly bills.
 - A software program such as “Quicken” is easy to learn. It can also create a tax summary report, which you can use for deducting allowed medical expenses.

Getting Help

- If you need extra emotional support, ask for help from people you trust. If it is hard to talk with your friends or family about certain situations, so ask your therapists and doctors if they know of any resources or support groups that you can access virtually or in person.
- Take time out to recognize all of the changes that have happened. You may need to grieve some losses. Know that you are not alone. Rely on your support system. Give yourself time to adjust to the changes.
- If you need help handling the emotions that come up, ask your doctor about referrals for counseling. It may be very helpful to talk with a rehab psychologist or other mental health provider who works with people who have health changes.
- There are resources and assistance in your community, county, and at the state and federal levels. But, sometimes the application processes can be frustrating and overwhelming. Speak to your social worker or PCP. Ask them to refer you to the proper resources, including vocational therapy.

Supplies

- Plan ahead before you shop. Create a list of supplies so you get what you need. Try to arrange your list by where the products are in the store. If you can avoid running all over the store, you may get less tired. Remember that the first choice you find might not be the best item or the best price.
- Use resources such as online ordering and delivery. Many offer free delivery if you're above a price point, or if it's your first time shopping with their services. This can help you save your energy for things you really want to do.
- Ask your pharmacy if they can provide multi-dose medicine packets. There are several pharmacies that provide this helpful service that can make it easier to fill medisets and help prevent missing a medicine dose.

Staying Current

- Follow research related to your injury or illness. Join online or in-person support groups to learn first-person approaches, medical advancements, or clinical studies that may affect or benefit you.
- Stay current with technology, especially in ways it may help you. Ask others who are going through the same situations you are if they've discovered modifications that can make your life easier. Some examples of technology and how it can be used in your everyday life are listed in the "Helpful Resources" section.
- Find good resources. Connect with other people, and find out what they know and what resources they suggest. To help get you started, please see the "Helpful Resources" section.

Notes

Questions?

Your questions are important. Talk with your doctor, nurse, or other healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

While you are a patient on Inpatient Rehab, call 206.598.4800.

After discharge, call your primary care provider or UWMC’s Rehabilitation Clinic at 206.598.4295.