

# Patient Care Instructions - Directions

## **Instructions:**

Use this template as a guide for creating your own Patient Care Instruction Sheet. I will give you examples of what you may want to include but this is to just get you started. I didn't include Patient Care details (ie. Administering medication, changing feeding tube, etc.) because you may not want visitors doing this without experience. However, it is something to consider. The goal is to make it your own!

Once you read through it, download the *Patient Care Instruction Template* and customize it to fit your loved one's needs. If it is easier, you may want to print the directions while you edit your version.

**Note:** To easily customize the *Template*, use the "Replace" feature to remove [Patient's Name] and replace it with your loved one's name. You will then want to "Replace" the [phone number] with yours. Last, you will want to remove the highlights before printing or emailing it.

## **Things that make the patient feel good:**

- **Affection** – Remember the section in my book (*Powerless to Powerful*) about skin hunger? It says that "skin hunger is when a human is deprived of meaningful human contact". If the patient is comfortable with the visitor, then encourage human contact. Of course, you'll want to ask the patient ahead of time if this is okay.

Here is a list of ideas to get you started:

- Holding hands
  - Warm hugs
  - Hand/Arm Massage
  - Foot Massage
  - Manicure/Pedicure
  - Back scratch or back rub
  - Gentle scratching/tickling of the arms/legs
- **Quality time** – If the patient is up for it, give a list of activities they would like to do when people visit. If you aren't sure, ask the patient for their input. They may want to sit and talk versus do an activity.

Here is a list of ideas to get you started:

- Reading to them
  - Playing soft music
  - Watching a movie/t.v.
  - Listening to stories (memories, funny stories about your kids, whatever).
  - Therapy dogs (typically needs to be planned ahead of time)
  - Play a game (board games, cards, etc.)
- **Love** – In your own words, explain how they bring brightness to the patient's life, whether it be laughing, reminiscing or just sitting together.

## Things to encourage:

- **Physical Therapy** – If the doctor wants the patient to exercise give specific directions.

### Things to consider:

- What kind of exercise can they do?
- What level of intensity?
- How long should they do exercise?
- Does the patient need support when exercising?
- Do they need encouragement or pushing to get them to exercise?
- What would help the patient get through it (i.e. music, tv, silence)
- Are there ways the visitor can make exercise more appealing (i.e. exercising with the patient)?

- **Rest** – Last thing you want is the patient to feel obligated to stay alert when they have visitors. Rest can be an important part of healing. Also, certain medications can cause drowsiness so staying awake may not even be an option. On the other hand, the doctors may not want the patient to sleep *too* much.

Again, every patient's needs are different, so you'll want to explain. Explain to visitors where the healthy balance between alertness and rest lies.

### Things to consider:

- How often should the patient rest?
- What conditions do they need to fall asleep? (sound machine, tv on in background, fan blowing on them)
- Is there anything they will need while resting? (oxygen, extra blankets, socks, etc.)
- Do they need to be woken up to eat or take medication?

- **Positivity** – In the nicest way you can, encourage visitors to put on a happy face (this does not include children). This may be the first time they have seen the patient since they have gotten sick. If the patient has lost weight or hair, it might be a shock. Brace them for the changes ahead of time and then point out that they need to stay positive during the visit. No sick patient should take on the role of consoling others (with the exception of their children).
- **Adventures** – If the patient is stuck inside a lot, they may be up for getting out for a little adventure (walk, wheelchair ride, drive, golf cart ride, etc.). In some cases, going on an adventure will not be possible. If so, you will want to make that clear as well.

### Things to consider:

- If they are wheelchair-bound, write down clear instructions as to how to get them in and out of the wheelchair. I also would recommend giving them a live demonstration before you leave (how to lock the wheels, put down foot rests, etc.).
- What type of adventures the patient can handle.
- How long the adventure should last (patient may get easily exhausted).

## Things to avoid:

- **Topics** - There may be topics the patient does not like to discuss or activities they do not like to do. If you aren't sure what these things are, ask the patient first. Then, you will want to clearly lay these out on the Patient Care Instruction sheet.

Remember you are familiar with the patient's needs while visitors may not. They may unknowingly irritate the patient but think they are helping. Giving them a list of "Things to Avoid" will help prevent this from happening. These will be different for every patient.

Here is a list of ideas to get you started:

- Discussing the patient's prognosis
- Harping on the negative
- Bragging about doing things the patient loved to do but now can't (note: some may love to hear these things and enjoy hearing about other's adventures)
- Politics
- Religion

## Food & Drink:

- **Food** - Give visitors a list of foods the patient likes to eat.

Things to consider:

- If they don't have much of an appetite, it helps visitors to know which foods to serve.
- If the patient is particular, explain/demonstrate how to make their food.
- If the patient is on a strict diet, list out foods to avoid. Also, make sure to include foods they can eat.
- Do they need to eat high calorie foods. Please include these as well.

- **Hydration** – Dehydration can be a detriment to one's health. Although food typically get the attention, reminding the patient to drink is just as important (if not more).

Things to consider:

- How often should the patient drink water?
- Is there a special drink they can have/prefer?
- Do they need a straw?
- Can the patient only use a sponge vs. drink water?

## While in the hospital:

- **Directions** – Highlight the most important details about the hospital. You can do this verbally as well.

Things to consider:

- Where bathrooms are located
- Where the nurse's station is in case of emergency
- How to push the call button (the patient will know this but what if they are not coherent)
- How to turn on the tv

- How/where to get extra pillows/blankets
- **Advocacy** – You want to have peace of mind when leaving the patient. Giving other adults directions for how to advocate may seem condescending but think about your experiences with caregiving. How much did you know about advocating before your loved one got sick? Plus, this is part of being a powerful advocate, advising others how to do it in your absence. Don't be afraid to give them direction. It will build their confidence.

Things to consider:

- If the patient seems to be acting strange, please alert the nurse immediately.
- If the vital sign machine (small machine hooked up to the patient by wires – includes blood pressure, etc.) begins beeping alert a nurse immediately. It may be something as simple as a kinked wire. However, you will need to make the nurse aware so she can help.
- Don't be afraid to speak up if something seems off.
- Don't feel you are overstepping boundaries!

#### **Slumber Party Mates:**

- **Special Instructions** - These are specific instructions for those staying the night whether it be at the hospital or at home.

Things to consider:

- Instructions on how to work the machines – assuming they don't need a nursing degree (how to hook up oxygen, unkink vital sign machine, etc.)
- Notes about the visitor's comfort – (i.e. the nurses will get you a sheet, blankets and pillows if there aren't any in the room for you. I would recommend at least two blankets as it gets cold!)

**Next Step:** If you haven't already, download the Patient Instructions Sheet Template and fill in the instructions for your loved one.