

Bringing a Hospital Bed Home

A free caregiver checklist for room setup, delivery day, safety, and daily care

Hospital Bed for Home

Free to print, copy, and share

Work through the first sections before the bed arrives, keep the rest by the bed. Tick each box as you go. General information, not medical advice. Ask the person's care team (doctor, nurse, or therapist) about their specific needs, and follow the bed maker's manual.

Measure the room and doorways

Before the bed is ordered

- ☐ Get the bed's outside size from the supplier. A standard home hospital bed is about 36 in. wide and 88 in. long with its head and foot boards (the mattress is 36 × 80 in.).
- ☐ Plan space beside the bed: about 24 in. of walking room on each side you'll use, and about 30 in. on a side used for wheelchair transfers.
- ☐ Measure each doorway's clear opening with the door open 90°, plus hallway turns and any stairs on the way in.
- ☐ Ask for the size of the largest piece. Most home beds arrive in sections and are assembled in the room.
- ☐ Using a floor lift? Check that its base can roll under the bed.

Example: a 36 × 88 in. bed with 30 in. on both sides and 24 in. at the foot needs about 96 × 112 in. (8 ft × 9 ft 4 in.) of floor space.

Source: [access-board.gov/ada](https://www.access-board.gov/ada)

Choose the spot

Before delivery

- ☐ Main floor if you can, close to a bathroom and to the center of family life.
- ☐ Decide which side the person will get out on, and keep that side the widest and clearest.
- ☐ Clear a path to the bathroom and the door. Remove loose rugs and low furniture.
- ☐ A lamp within reach of the bed and a night light for the path.
- ☐ Check the manual for any space the bed needs as it rises or tilts.

Power and outlets

Before delivery

- ☐ A grounded (three-prong) outlet near the head of the bed.
- ☐ Route cords away from walkways, out from under the bed frame, and clear of moving parts.
- ☐ Follow the bed manual on extension cords and power strips.
- ☐ Plan outlets for other equipment too, such as an air mattress pump, a phone charger, or a monitor.
- ☐ Keep the hand control within the person's reach, its cord untangled and unpinched.

Linens

Before delivery

- ☐ Fitted sheets sized for the mattress: 36 × 80 in. hospital bed sheets. Twin XL (38 × 80) fit loosely; regular twin (75 in. long) are too short.
- ☐ Match the sheet's pocket depth to the mattress. Pressure-relief mattresses are often thicker.
- ☐ A waterproof mattress cover, plus absorbent pads if needed.
- ☐ A draw sheet or slide sheet for moving the person up in bed.
- ☐ At least two sets, so one can be in the wash.
- ☐ Keep sheets smooth, dry, and wrinkle-free. Nothing bulky stuffed into gaps; no objects left in the bed.

Delivery day

Before the delivery team leaves

- ☐ Bed set up in the planned spot, within reach of the outlet.
- ☐ Every function tested through its full range: head, knees, and height.
- ☐ Brakes locked and unlocked on every wheel.
- ☐ Mattress fits snugly, rails installed correctly, no wide gaps at the rails, head, or foot.
- ☐ You have the manual, the service phone number, and know what to do if the power goes out.
- ☐ Rental or purchase, and pickup or return steps, written down.

Rails and entrapment safety

Before first use, then regularly

- ☐ Ask the care team whether rails are right for this person. The FDA lists higher risk for people with confusion, restlessness, poor muscle control, dementia, Parkinson's, MS, stroke, or low blood pressure.
- ☐ Use rails and a mattress made to work with this bed. Rails, mattresses, and frames are not all interchangeable.
- ☐ No gap between the mattress, rails, and head or foot board should be wide enough to trap the head or body. Recheck after any mattress, topper, or rail change.
- ☐ Add-on (portable) rails: check for the ASTM F3186-17 standard, and attach the safety strap as the maker directs.
- ☐ Alternatives the FDA lists: a bed lowered close to the floor, roll guards, foam bumpers, a concave mattress, or a trapeze. Rails don't replace supervision.

Sources: [fda.gov/medical-devices/general-hospital-devices-and-supplies/hospital-beds](https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/general-hospital-devices-and-supplies/hospital-beds) · [fda.gov/medical-devices/adult-portable-bed-rail-safety/recommendations-consumers-and-caregivers-about-adult-portable-bed-rails](https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/adult-portable-bed-rail-safety/recommendations-consumers-and-caregivers-about-adult-portable-bed-rails) · [fda.gov/medical-devices/hospital-beds/guide-bed-safety-bed-rails-hospitals-nursing-homes-and-home-health-care-facts](https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/hospital-beds/guide-bed-safety-bed-rails-hospitals-nursing-homes-and-home-health-care-facts)

Mattress and pressure care

Every day

- ☐ Use the mattress the bed maker specifies (36 × 80 in. on a standard bed). It should fit snugly.
- ☐ Soft, air, and topper surfaces can compress and widen gaps at the rails. Recheck gaps after adding one.
- ☐ In bed most of the day? Ask the care team about a pressure-redistributing mattress or overlay.
- ☐ Change position every 1 to 2 hours, or as the care team advises.
- ☐ Check skin daily: heels, ankles, knees, hips, tailbone, spine, elbows, shoulders, back of the head, ears. Report redness, warm, spongy, or hard spots, or broken skin.
- ☐ Pillows or foam between the knees and ankles; a pillow under the calves to lift the heels. No pillows under the knees.

Source: [medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000147.htm](https://www.medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000147.htm)

Caregiver body mechanics

Every time you give care

- ☐ Lock the wheels first. Raise the bed to about waist height for care, then lower it again when you're done.
- ☐ Stand close, one foot ahead of the other, knees bent, back straight. Shift your weight from leg to leg instead of twisting.
- ☐ Moving someone up in bed: lay the bed flat, use a draw or slide sheet, two people, pull rather than lift, and never pull under the arms.
- ☐ If the person can't stand on at least one leg, transfers need a lift.
- ☐ Ask a nurse, physical therapist, or occupational therapist to show you transfers and repositioning before you need them.

Sources: [medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000429.htm](https://www.medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000429.htm) · [medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000426.htm](https://www.medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000426.htm) · [medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000428.htm](https://www.medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000428.htm)

Quick daily safety check

Every day

- ☐ Wheels locked; bed at its lowest when the person is in it.
- ☐ Call button or phone, water, glasses, and a light within reach.
- ☐ Mattress snug; rails (if used) secure; no wide gaps.
- ☐ Cords out of walkways and away from the frame; path to the bathroom clear and lit.
- ☐ Sheets smooth and dry; skin checked.

Who to call

Fill in and keep by the bed

Bed supplier / service

Nurse or care team

Doctor

Eldercare Locator (local help, respite, equipment programs)

1-800-677-1116 · eldercare.acl.gov

Medicare questions

1-800-MEDICARE · 1-800-633-4227

Emergency

911

Notes