

You have the right to remain with the person you care for if you wish, and your loved one has the right to have you with them

It's a right but never a duty; you may be exhausted and need respite. A relationship of trust and understanding with the ward staff will enable you to take breaks.

If you are able to support the person you care for through a hospital stay, you bring invaluable benefits – particularly around admission and discharge times and through transitions in care. You know the person, you understand what they like and dislike, and you are aware of their health issues. You can contribute to their safety, confidence and well-being and help them maintain their level of function. You can help communication between different groups of professionals in and out of hospital.

You are part of a team with the health professionals, respecting their skills and knowledge as you hope they will respect yours. Where nurses may be uncomfortable doing their work in front of family members, you can reassure and support them.

You know the person behind the patient and can help hospital staff know them too. Their up-to-date 'This Is Me' document is a valuable tool. Also, photos at different stages of their life can be something for the person you care for to look at and remember, and also act as powerful reminders to others of their vivid past and present.

Confidentiality and consent may be issues – you should make sure you have your loved one's consent to be involved, and that you know if there the areas where you should step back.

You need to be part of the whole ward, respecting the needs of the other patients. This may involve leaving your own relative's bedside for a while at the request of a nurse if the patient next door is about to undergo a procedure requiring privacy and a respect for their dignity.

You have to understand the process of ward rounds and when it is and is not acceptable to interrupt the clinical staff. You will want to make it easy for other patients to rest as well as adding your contribution of sympathy and cheerfulness to the ward. For patients who do not have family or close friends nearby, there may be moments you can be there for them too, in some small way.

Overnight stays can pose problems for hospitals that are obliged not to allow mixed gender arrangements. On the other hand it may be of crucial importance for the person you are supporting so you need to tread a fine line between flexibility and insistence.

Clearly you care at least as much as anyone else about hygiene and infection control in the wards. It's important to be aware from the start what arrangements are in place and be seen to be scrupulous in complying with them.

You should find out what facilities are available, such as toilet, shower, tea-making. There may be concessions to which you are entitled, like reduced car parking and meals costs, and a carers support worker in the hospital or a collection of information leaflets about support available in the wider locality. It can be helpful to talk with other carers there, pooling experience. And perhaps you can learn useful techniques such as safe lifting while you are supporting the person you love in hospital. It's definitely a good idea to have a notebook and write down all you can.

There's 1 in 3 chance that any nurse, doctor, therapist, hospital administrator, ancillary worker will one day be a carer themselves.

### Admiral Nurses

Helpline and email service gives practical advice and emotional support to anyone affected by dementia. [www.dementiauk.org/information-support/admiral-nursing-direct/](http://www.dementiauk.org/information-support/admiral-nursing-direct/)  
Tel: 0845 257 9406 Email: [direct@dementiauk.org](mailto:direct@dementiauk.org)

### Age UK

The country's largest charity dedicated to helping everyone make the most of later life. Local representatives can give advice and support. [www.ageuk.org.uk/](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/)

Tel: 0800 169 6565 Email: [contact@ageuk.org.uk](mailto:contact@ageuk.org.uk)

### Alzheimer's Society

A support and research charity for people with dementia and their carers. It provides information and support on all forms of dementia. Local representatives can give advice and support. [www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk) Tel: 0300 222 11 22 Email: [enquiries@alzheimers.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@alzheimers.org.uk)

### Carers Trust

Help and advice for carers. Carers Trust is a major charity for, with and about carers. Tel: 0844 800 4361 to find your nearest local support or <https://carers.org/> Email: [info@carers.org](mailto:info@carers.org)

### Carers UK

Help and advice for carers . A national membership charity for carers, Carers UK is both a support network and a movement for change. <http://www.carersuk.org/> Tel: 0808 808 7777

John's Campaign has a focus on dementia which is reflected in the contacts suggested here. However there are many other organisations with influence and expertise in particular conditions. A well-known example is Parkinsons UK . Whatever the condition that is affecting your or your dependents life, there is almost certain to be a dedicated support group which you might consider contacting, if you have not already done so.

If you are anxious about any aspect of a hospital stay you may find it useful to contact their PALS (Patient Advice and Liaison Services) department.

You might also decide to use Patient Opinion. This is an independent website publishing people's experiences of UK health services **good** or **bad**. Comments from patients or carers are published anonymously but are passed on to the right people to make a difference. This aims to bring a new openness to the health service and has often proved effective in resolving difficulties quickly. <https://www.patientopinion.org.uk/>



*A leaflet for Carers  
who are supporting the person they care for  
through a hospital admission*

*Produced in consultation with  
the Royal College of Nursing  
and the Carers Trust*

