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Caregiver's Checklist for Emergency Room Visits

You can never fully prepare for emergencies. However, being responsible for someone requires an additional level of preparation, which can ultimately remove some stress from the event if and when it happens. Consider the following tips for preparing a medical travel bag for an unexpected Urgent Care or Emergency Room visit with your care recipient.

Prior to an Emergency, Prepare a Medical Travel Bag:

- Have emergency contact information including health care professionals and family members
- Maintain an easily accessible copy of an updated medication list, as well as a list of prior surgeries and procedures, allergies, and a summary of family medical history
- Have copies of medical insurance cards and photo ID
- Maintain a copy of any legal documents such as advanced care directives to accompany you to the emergency room
- Have a packed bag in your closet ready to grab that may include a change of clothes and any other items you may need to remain at the hospital for a day or two if necessary.
- Have an emergency plan in place with a couple of family members or friends that can be called to support the care recipient and you at the hospital. If you do not have numbers programmed into a phone, have an emergency call sheet in the medical travel bag.

During an Emergency:

- Remain calm
- Prior to the paramedics arriving jot down any vital information (BP, Glucose levels, timeline of last spoken words, last sign of consciousness, medications taken, etc.) in addition to grabbing the patient information organized above

- Identify yourself and your relationship to the patient
- Relay all critical information in a brief and concise manner to the paramedics, medical personnel, etc.
- Identify changes in mannerisms and reactions from the patient and report them to the medical personnel.
- If you drive your care recipient to the hospital and they use oxygen, remember to bring a portable unit to the hospital. Sometimes, there may be a long wait.
- Be an advocate for the patient: listen, ask questions, and raise concerns when appropriate
- Remain out of the way of medical personnel performing their jobs
- Wait patiently outside the room when asked
- Take care of yourself, avoid missing meals and drink fluids
- Call for support for yourself and the patient

After the Immediate Crisis

- If your care recipient is not admitted to the hospital, you will want to bring along their medical equipment like walkers or wheelchairs when they are ready to go home.

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