

# Going Home For The Weekend



*Important things to consider when preparing for weekend leave...*

## When can you go home for the weekend?

Although this will happen as soon as possible, the right time is not the same for everyone. Some patients will be ready for their first home leave after just one or two weeks in the ward. Other patients may need to be in the NRH for a long time before they are ready to go on home leave. For some people it may be appropriate to spend a few hours at home initially and build up to spending the entire weekend at home. The person who lives with you must also be ready for this to happen. If you live alone, you may want someone else to be involved and this can take time to arrange.

## Why is it important to go home for the weekend?

Here in the National Rehabilitation Hospital we encourage patients, where possible, to go home for weekend leave. Going home for the weekend is seen as an important part of your rehabilitation. Patients benefit from this time at home for many reasons, for example:

- It will give you real life experiences to help you adjust to changes in your abilities following your injury.
- It will provide an opportunity to practise skills learned as part of your rehabilitation at the hospital - for example, caring for children, walking outdoors, using your mobile phone, driving, dressing or preparing meals.
- You will be able to spend quality time with friends and family.
- It helps you identify supports in the community that will be needed following discharge from hospital, for example, home help, personal assistant, and community therapy.
- It provides a time to rest and take a break from the challenges of the rehabilitation setting.
- It will give your family the opportunity to practise the skills they will need to care for you at home.
- It allows you to prepare for your final discharge home.

## Important things to consider when preparing for weekend leave

- Be clear about when you are due back on the ward after your leave.
- Arrange your transport home. A nurse can assist you with this.
- It is important that your home is safe and that you are able to get into your home and move around it without difficulty, for example, to get upstairs to your bedroom or get into your shower. The Occupational Therapy service in the hospital, or from your local community may visit your home before your weekend leave to ensure this is the case.

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### Important things to consider when preparing weekend leave

- Be sure to know what skills learned in rehabilitation should be practised at home. Keep notes on instructions and ask about anything that is not clear. It can be helpful to write out guidelines with your therapists and set some goals to achieve during your time at home.
- Discuss with hospital staff in the NRH what is safe for you to do alone and what activities you will need help with, for example, showering, going to the shops on your own and climbing stairs.
- It is important that you are as independent as possible and get involved in as many activities as you can when you go home. Sometimes family members want to help as much as possible which can result in you not achieving as much as you could from your time at home.
- While you will want to take full advantage of this chance to visit with friends and family, it is important not to become exhausted. It is good advice to limit the amount of visitors at one time and limit the amount of time visitors stay for.
- Be sure to know all the prescribed medicines you should take and when you should take them.
- Pharmacy will supply a sufficient quantity of medication for your weekend leave.
- Do not take drugs or medicine that have not been prescribed for you.
- Follow any diet, exercise, rest, and other health practices recommended by hospital staff.
- Do not drink alcohol unless cleared to do so by your Consultant.
- Do not drive unless cleared to do so by your Consultant.

### What can others do to make your visit home a success?

- Encourage the person to rest regularly.
- Encourage the person to join in with activities as suggested by staff in the NRH.
- Control the amount of visitors and how long they stay for.
- Attend therapies and participate in sessions with ward staff at the NRH to prepare for the weekend at home.

Going home for the first time is a very exciting time, however it can also be a time of stress and anxiety for both you and your family. The most important thing is to seek the advice of the nurses, therapists and hospital staff to ensure you and your family are fully prepared.

Following your first time at home it is important to fill out the NRH Weekend Leave Checklist and return it to a nurse on your ward. This information can be used to identify any problems you may have had and plan future trips home.