

SCI Patient Education Questions:
11/19/2014

1. When are the patient haircuts? Day and time?

- Haircuts are available on the first Tuesday of every month in Building 7 in the F wing Day room.

2. How do I prepare for outside settings that are different than the hospital setting?

- Therapies will help you prepare with physical logistics like how to navigate curbs.
- Asking for help from other people when you are out and being proactive in directing people how to help you can really enhance your experience in different or new settings.
- Have someone else like a caregiver drive your wheelchair into a new setting so they can understand what barriers ahead of time there might be from what will be your perspective.
- Preparing for peoples often funny reactions or uneasiness in reacting to you can be handled by often having preplanned or rehearsed responses can put others at ease and help prepare you for new setting and people's reactions. Talk with staff here and with other SCI Veterans to develop these responses in advance.

3. Can we rearrange the patio to be more conducive for wheelchairs? It's hard to find spots around the tables that MWC and PWC can fit and sit next to ambulatory counterparts.

- There are some new rounder tables on the patio that are designed for better accessibility.
- Asking someone to move the picnic table benches away from the tables will help.

- Using your wheelchair to back up and gently nudge a picnic bench out of the way is also possible but ultimately it is better to simply ask someone handy to rearrange the benches.

4. I am an inpatient and need to go to the store, who can take me?

- Patients are not taken to stores unless it is part of their therapy goals. Recreation therapy can help you plan some trips.

5. Where can I get a phone card to call my family members?

- Voluntary Services can provide phone cards for veterans to use during hospital stays.
- The Local PVA chapter also has a loaner cell phone program during hospital stays.
- WorldXChange, Sprint and other carriers provide pay-as-you-go 800 numbers you can use like a phone card. Sign-up on line with a credit card.
- Ring a Ling-Saturday Dec. 13 9:30a-1pm. Volunteers will be coming to the hospital to carol and pass out phone cards to inpatients.

6. What is the difference between the PVA and Recreation Therapy as far as who provides what services? What types of services can I request from each group?

- The PVA National Service Representative helps with obtaining Veteran's benefits, including services you may have been unfairly denied at a VA medical facility, VA pensions, home modification grants, education grants, etc.
- The local Bay Area and Western PVA chapter supports our recreation therapy to help provide services. This helps support travel to recreational activities. They sponsor their own recreational activities, support groups and other activities. They can also advocate for Veterans in the hospital or with Veterans' local governments (e.g., curb cut needed).

- Recreation Therapy makes individual rehabilitation plans, organizes outings and team sports, organizes art competitions and other leisure activities, and facilitates participation in national sporting events for Veterans.
- While each group is separate they all work together to provide services in concert with each other.

7. When will arts and crafts items be given out? I.E. wallets, models, etc.

- Church groups have carts that will come through during the Holiday times.
- Recreation has crafts and kits so ask to speak to your recreation therapists.

8. How often can I get a new wheelchair?

- There is no set time frame to replace your wheelchair. (It is not every 5 years as many people think they have to wait)
- Wheelchairs are replaced if the costs for repair or modifications exceed 50% of the chair's cost.
- Wheelchairs can be changed as persons' medical needs change. Your provider and therapists can help you decide if a new chair is warranted for your changing circumstances.

9. What if I get home and realize I can't do things on my own that I thought I could manage independently?

- A home care team can be sent to evaluate your situation usually up to a 100 mile radius.
- Your local VA can also assist you with your needs if problems arise after you return home.
- Becoming as independent as possible to work out any kinks before you go home is the best recipe before you go home. Using the therapy apartment for practice overnight or weekend stays prior to you discharge can help you realize if there will be problems.

- Practice self-catheterization prior to leaving the hospital unit in other situations so you feel competent in different circumstances.
- Tapping community resources such as social service agencies who have qualified individuals that can help meet your care needs can be quite useful. The Community Independent Living Centers are a great resource for information and resources.

10. What happens if I fall out of my wheelchair and can't get up?

- Work with OT and PT to learn how to get back into your chair and how to direct others to assist you without making the situation worse.
- Practice fall prevention. Be aware of your surroundings, and watch where you are going. Think ahead and understand your limitations.
- Have your local firehouse number which you could call for help.
- If it would be helpful, the VA can issue you an alert call device that calls your selected numbers for someone who could help, and calls 911 if no one else is reached. Ask your social worker about this.

11. Can I access any VA hospital for additional supplies such as catheters and leg bags if I go on vacation and run out of supplies?

- Your local VA or CBOC can potentially re-supply you. However, the brand or model of the supply may be different than what is dispensed by your local VA (it's not reliable that they will have the specific items that you need available. Many items we issue are special order.

- Planning ahead can really help prevent you from running out of supplies.

12. Is every veteran entitled to VA healthcare? How does VA healthcare differ between service connected veterans and non-service connected? Do some veterans have to pay out of pocket to access VA?

- Veterans are for the most part entitled to VA healthcare.
- Healthcare is largely determined by enrollment categories that are both based on service connectedness and income base. What and whether you need to pay out of pocket is determined largely by these two factors.
- Spinal cord injury falls into the catastrophic health care category. All honorably discharged Veterans with spinal cord injuries are eligible for free VA health care if the injury causes impaired functioning.
- Make sure you are correctly listed as spinal cord injured.
- If you're wondering about referring anyone else, just do it! If they were ever in the military, we'll help figure out if they qualify; almost all the time, they do.