

Transition of Care Visit – Charles P. Catania, MD

When you've had an emergency room (ER) visit or been admitted to the hospital, it's easy to think that once you leave, your care is over. However, following up with your primary care provider (PCP) after such an event is not only crucial to your recovery but also to reducing the risk of further complications, medical errors, and unnecessary healthcare costs. This follow-up care is part of a process called "transitions of care," which ensures a smooth, coordinated handoff from hospital to home or from urgent care back to regular health management.

Why Following Up with Your Primary Care Provider is Important After an ER Visit or Hospital Admission

- **Ensures Continuity of Care**
After an ER visit or hospitalization, your care doesn't end when you leave the hospital doors. Many patients leave with prescriptions, follow-up instructions, and potential changes to their treatment plan. Having a follow-up visit with your PCP ensures that all these changes are reviewed and properly integrated into your long-term care plan. Your PCP will also ensure that any new treatments or medications are working as intended and address any concerns you may have about your recovery.
- **Preventing Post-Hospital Complications**
While hospitals work hard to treat immediate health issues, follow-up appointments help identify and prevent any complications that may arise after discharge. Without follow-up care, issues like infections, medication side effects, or the worsening of existing conditions may not be caught in time. By meeting with your PCP, they can monitor your recovery and intervene early if necessary.
- **Improves Health Outcomes**
Research shows that patients who have follow-up care after a hospitalization or ER visit tend to recover faster and have better long-term health outcomes. Your PCP is familiar with your medical history and can tailor your recovery plan to suit your specific needs. They can also ensure you understand your care plan and are taking the necessary steps to maintain your health.
- **Reducing the Risk of Medication Errors**
One common issue that arises after an ER visit or hospital stay is confusion about medications. Hospitals often prescribe new medications, and sometimes patients are sent home with a mix of prescriptions from different doctors. Your PCP can help review all your medications and ensure there are no interactions or errors. They can also help you understand your prescriptions and when to take them.

How Transitions of Care Help Reduce Medical Costs

Transitioning care from the hospital to your PCP isn't just good for your health - it can also save you money. Here's how:

- **Reduces the Need for Unnecessary ER Visits**
A successful transition of care helps prevent unnecessary ER visits. Without proper follow-up, you might face complications that lead to another trip to the ER or even a readmission to the hospital. These visits are often expensive and could be avoided with a well-coordinated follow-up plan. By staying connected with your PCP, you can resolve minor issues before they escalate into

emergencies.

- **Prevents Readmissions**

Hospital readmissions are not only disruptive to your recovery, but they are also costly. Many readmissions can be avoided with proper follow-up care and monitoring. Research shows that timely follow-up after discharge can reduce the likelihood of readmission by addressing issues early, ensuring that your recovery is on track, and that any red flags are caught early.

- **Improves Efficiency in Healthcare**

When transitions of care are managed effectively, healthcare providers can avoid unnecessary tests and procedures. Your PCP, who knows your medical history, can ensure that you aren't repeatedly tested or treated for the same condition, which can reduce the overall cost of your care. Effective communication between your hospital team and your PCP is essential for a streamlined process, preventing duplication and improving efficiency.

- **Promotes Preventative Care**

Your PCP is there to help you maintain your overall health and prevent future health issues. By staying up to date with regular check-ups and follow-up visits, you can avoid more serious and costly health conditions in the future. For example, managing chronic conditions like diabetes or high blood pressure early can prevent costly complications, such as strokes or kidney failure, later.

How to Make the Most of Your Follow-Up Appointment

To ensure your follow-up visit is as productive as possible, here are a few tips:

- **Bring a List of Your Medications**

Include both prescriptions and over-the-counter medications, as well as any changes to your medications made during your hospital stay or ER visit.

- **Understand Your Discharge Instructions**

If you don't understand something from your hospital discharge papers, make sure to ask your PCP during your follow-up appointment.

- **Prepare Questions**

Think about any concerns you may have about your recovery or treatment. Don't hesitate to bring them up with your PCP.

- **Keep Track of Your Symptoms**

Keep a record of any new symptoms, changes, or concerns since your hospital visit. This will help your PCP monitor your progress.

Conclusion

The importance of following up with your primary care provider after an ER visit or hospital admission cannot be overstated. This follow-up care ensures that you receive the necessary attention to prevent complications, improve your recovery, and ensure your overall health is well managed. More than just helping you heal, transitions of care can reduce healthcare costs by preventing unnecessary ER visits, readmissions, and duplication of tests. So, when you're discharged from the hospital or after an

emergency care visit, don't forget to schedule that important follow-up with your PCP - it's a key step in ensuring your health and financial well-being.

At PentaHealth, we will call you most times for a transition of care visit after your discharge, however if you don't hear from us within 24 hours of coming out of the hospital, please call us so we can schedule your appropriate follow-up. Lots of times transition of care visits can even be done virtually!

We want to continue to provide the best care possible to you and your family. Please call us first for all your healthcare needs!

Dr. Charles P. Catania is the medical director for PentaHealth. He is board certified in Family Medicine and Hospice Medicine. He received his medical degree from the American University of the Caribbean School of Medicine; medically trained in England; and completed residency at Underwood Memorial Hospital in Woodbury, New Jersey, where he was named Chief Resident in 2009 and served on the New Jersey Academy of Family Physicians Board of Directors.

Dr. Catania has been in a private practice setting since 2010 and has been named "Readers' Choice Top Doc" in South Jersey Magazine in August 2013, and "Top Doc" by his peers in Mainline Today Magazine in 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022.

Dr. Catania has an interest in all facets of family medicine. He enjoys spending time and getting to know his patients on a personal level and providing care when they need it most. He loves working our walk-in hours and in our PentaHealth Today clinic on Sundays.

He treasures time with his wife and children, and he takes pride in bringing a very personal and friendly experience when caring for his patients here at PentaHealth.



Dr. Charles P. Catania