

REVIEW OF:
“Hospital Safety For Those With Hearing Loss”
Presented by:
Elaine McCaffrey
Reviewed by: Bobbi Rodriguez

Hospital safety is a big concern for everyone, but it is often difficult for those who are hard of hearing. We need to hear the questions being asked. We need to hear instructions and information given us. Not being able to understand can make the difference in a proper diagnosis of the problem and, in some cases, make the difference between life and death.

One of the main things Elaine stressed: This is not the time to fake that you understand. Hard-of-hearing people are famous for pretending they understood what is being said because they are tired of asking for clarification. But this is a situation where being clear is necessary.

There are many things we can do. First of all: be assertive. Let medical personnel know you have a hearing problem. Have a pen and pad so you can ask for something unclear to be written down. A smart phone with a voice recognition app can be used. Don't be afraid to repeat what you thought was heard and ask if it is correct. Always ask for clarification if uncertain. Pocket talkers, portable loops and other assistive technology can be helpful.

When needing to have a hospital stay, take a personal hospital bag with all you need to communicate labeled with your name, birthdate, and phone number. Don't leave your hearing devices at home and remember batteries and chargers. A case to store your devices in is also a good idea. You can also bring a sign to put over your bed telling everyone that you have a hearing loss so they know when they enter the room.

HLAA has provided a Communication Access Plan (CAP) that can be used with any provider. It gives them complete details about your hearing loss and how they can work with you to communicate during your visit. It can be downloaded from hearingloss.org with instructions on how to use it. Ask that they keep it with your chart.

Any visit to the doctor or hospital can be nerve-racking, but with some preparation you can ease some of the uneasiness. Be assertive and don't fake!