

What to Tell Your Patient about Hospital Status

Explain 'At' Capacity vs. 'Over' Capacity

A hospital goes “**At Capacity**” when there are not enough beds or staff available in the emergency room or the hospital itself to adequately care for patients because the supporting resources are **fully** committed.

A hospital goes “**Over Capacity**” when there are no beds or staff available in the emergency room or the hospital itself to adequately care for patients because the supporting resources are **over** committed. (note: exceptions)

If Patient Chooses to go to the 'At or Over Capacity' Hospital

The patient still has the right to go to the hospital of their choice, but understand, if their illness or injury is not serious, they may have to wait longer than usual to be seen by a doctor. Also, if he/she needs to be admitted and there is a shortage of beds in the hospital, he/she may be held in the emergency room or other area of the hospital until the type of bed they may need becomes available. There is also the possibility that he/she may be transferred to another hospital for admission.

What If My Doctor Doesn't Go To A Different Hospital?

The patient's doctor will not come to the hospital's emergency room to evaluate them. Instead, the emergency room physician will consult with the family doctor if necessary. If the hospital needs critical medical records, the records will be transferred.

Will My Insurance Pay If I Go To A Different Hospital?

If the patient's condition requires care in the emergency room, health insurance generally covers that care regardless of which hospital you visit. This includes times when the hospital covered by the patient's plan is 'At or Over Capacity' and the patient is taken to a hospital not covered by that plan.

What if the patient must be transferred to the 'in network' hospital, will there be an extra charge for the transfer?

Insurance companies contacted have all said that, although it is rare, the extra charge for transfer will be waived if the initial hospital requested was 'At or Over Capacity'.