

# Health Tips

## from New London Hospital

**What is a hospitalist?** A hospitalist is a physician who specializes in caring for patients while in the hospital.

**When and why was this specialty developed?** The concept of doctors who manage inpatient care emerged in the mid-1990's. It arose from the need for a medical professional to coordinate the care of hospitalized patients, growing concerns for patient safety, increasing healthcare costs, and demands of primary care providers (PCPs) to spend more time with their patients in the office.



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**What are the functions of a hospitalist?** A hospitalist manages all aspects of a patient's hospitalization, including admission and discharge, overseeing patient care, ordering tests and lab work, writing orders, consulting with the patient's PCP and specialists, and discharge planning. He also communicates with patients and families.

**What are a hospitalist's qualifications?** A hospitalist is an expert in acute and chronic healthcare who can immediately recognize and treat changes in a patient's condition. She is on-site, often Board-certified, familiar with the hospital and how it operates and is managed.

**What are the benefits to patients of having a hospitalist?** A hospitalist is in the hospital every day, Monday through Friday, and thereby able to respond immediately to patients' needs or changes in condition. Because he is based in the hospital, he has a vested interest in improving the quality of care. Studies show that a hospitalist program can reduce costs and length of stay and lead to improved clinical outcomes. This is due to improved coordination of patient care and efficient time management.

Patients who have scheduled office appointments with their PCP no longer have to face the interruption, cancellation or delay in being seen that results when a PCP is called from the office to the hospital to admit or care for an inpatient. The PCP is able to focus completely upon the needs of the patient in the office.

**How can I be sure my PCP is being kept informed of my condition while I'm hospitalized?** Through an established protocol, the hospitalist communicates regularly with each patient's PCP to ensure awareness of the patient's progress, any concerns or changes in condition, and overall coordination of care.

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