

Discharge criteria card

Discharge on criteria, not on the calendar.

Five clinical criteria — all must be met

☐	Pain controlled on oral analgesia — no parenteral analgesia required in the last 24 hours
☐	Tolerating oral diet without IV fluids — drip down, eating, not nauseated
☐	Passing flatus or stool — gut function returned
☐	Mobilising at or near their own baseline — safely, without assistance they will not have at home
☐	No untreated complication; observations stable — afebrile, no unexplained tachycardia

Three social criteria — solve them, do not ignore them or wait them out

☐	Safe home circumstances — somewhere to sleep, someone nearby for the first days if needed
☐	Able to get help — a telephone number that a person answers, and a way to travel back
☐	Understands the warning signs — confirmed by teach-back, with a family member present

What the patient physically leaves with

☐	Written analgesia plan naming the point at which they STOP — not an open-ended opioid supply
☐	Warning signs written plainly, in a language they read
☐	A telephone number that a person actually answers
☐	A follow-up appointment with a date on it
☐	Wound care instructions
☐	Thromboprophylaxis plan if continuing at home (up to 28 days after major cancer or pelvic surgery)
☐	Confirmation that a family member has had the same explanation
☐	Their milestone card / diary to take home

Follow-up

When	Who	Ask specifically about
48–72 hours	Ward nurse or ERAS coordinator, by telephone	Pain · eating · bowels · wound · fever · are you walking? Do not ask “how are you” — everyone says fine.
Clinic appointment	Surgical team	Wound, function, return to normal activity, and whether the analgesia was stopped as planned
30 days	ERAS coordinator (record only)	Readmission · complication (Clavien-Dindo) · reoperation · ED attendance

Why the 48-72 hour call matters. It is the cheapest safety net any hospital has, and it is what makes a shorter stay defensible rather than reckless. Without 30-day outcome capture you cannot honestly claim your ERAS pathway works — you can only claim that people left sooner.