

Safer Together

A Safety Guide for Patients, their Families and Friends

Three of the most common safety risks for patients are infections, medications and falls. You can help lower your risk with the following tips:

Avoiding Falls

Falling can result in a serious injury, but most falls are preventable. You are at greater risk of falling when you are feeling unwell or are in unfamiliar surroundings. Reducing falls is everyone's responsibility; patients, family, friends and health care staff.

To Reduce your Risk of Falling

- Look around, slow down, and hold onto something. **Ask for assistance**, wait for help and be cautious. Don't risk falling.
- **Tell staff and caregivers** if you are unsteady on your feet or if you have ever had a fall.
- **Take your time**; use needed supports such as cane, walker or crutches especially when getting out of bed or a chair.
- **Keep often-used items within reach**; use your call bell for assistance.
- **Report spills right away**. Wet floors can cause accidents. Tell a staff member if the floor in your area is wet, and use caution if you see a "wet floor" sign.
- Avoid wearing clothing that is too loose or too long.
- **Wear footwear that fits well and has good traction**. Indoor shoes with a low heel and rubber soles are best.

Avoid an Infection

Clean Your Hands

- Washing your hands is the best way to avoid infections. Wash your hands for at least 30 seconds.
- Use the alcohol based hand rub (sanitizer) when washing. Rub hands with sanitizer for 20 seconds. You can also use soap and warm water.
- Remind staff to wash their hands before they care for you—they'll appreciate the reminder!
- Encourage your visitors to clean their hands.

Stop the germs

- 'Cover your cough.' Use a sleeve or tissue for coughs and sneezes, not your hand.
- Get your flu shot, if recommended by your health care provider.
- Remind family and friends not to visit you in the hospital if they have a fever, cough or other contagious illness.

Know your Medicine

Make sure your health care provider knows all the medications you're taking. Including over the counter, herbs and traditional medicine.

- Keep an up-to-date list of the medications or any other drugs you take.
- Bring your list with you every time you visit your health care provider. Remember to update your list. You can use a medication record book or smart phone app to manage medications: www.knowledgeisthebestmedicine.org
- If a change is made to your medications, ask why. If the medication you're given doesn't look familiar, speak up and tell staff before you take it.
- Know what your medications are for and how to take them (e.g. with food). Make sure you know what you are taking and why.
- Have you ever had a reaction to a medication or food product or are you allergic to anything? If so, tell a member of your health care team.



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Verifying who you are

For your safety, we routinely check and confirm who you are at registration, before tests, medication administration, procedures or while receiving care. This can be done by confirming your name, date of birth, address or checking your wristband. Please let us know if you change your name, address, phone number, or emergency contact.

Always ask questions if you are not sure.
If something doesn't seem right,
don't just think it, say it.

Ask, Listen, Talk

Safety starts with good communication. Help us keep you safe by practicing good communication

- **ASK** your health care providers about your health care plan. Find out what you can do to feel better and improve your health.
- **LISTEN** carefully and ask for more information, especially if you don't understand. Take notes and bring friends or family member with you for support.
- **TALK** about your concerns, needs and priorities with your healthcare care providers.

Going Home

Make sure you know what to do when you go home.

- If you have to stay in hospital, planning for going home should begin early in your stay. It is important to talk about your living situation and to make arrangements ahead of time.
- Ask for written instructions, including medications, treatments, and follow-up appointments.
- Be sure you know what to do to keep up your health at home.
- Know what danger signs to watch for at home.
- Know when to call and who to call if you need additional care.

Ask for an interpreter if your are hearing impaired or if English is not your first language.

Patients can play a vital role in making care safe by being aware, informed and actively involved as a member of their health care team.



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