

Patient Tips:

Becoming Involved in Your Health Care

Be involved in your health care. Share information with your health care team, listen, and ask questions or raise concerns you have about your care and safety.

Share Information

- Make your doctor aware if you have seen or are seeing more than one doctor about your health concerns.
- Make sure that all health professionals involved in your care have important health information about you. Inform them of any chronic conditions, such as high blood pressure, diabetes or allergies.
- Be aware that you will likely be asked the same questions repeatedly (e.g. what is your name). This is done to ensure your safety and that the information provided is accurate and complete.
- Ensure your doctor knows all the medications, herbal supplements or vitamins you are taking. Even over-the-counter medications, such as cold medicine or vitamins, can have an effect on prescription medications.
- Keep track of any adverse reactions or allergies you have to food or medications and inform your doctor promptly.
- When you visit the doctor or go to the hospital, bring your medications – or an updated list – with you.

Listen

- Keep a medical journal that keeps the details about your treatment and care. Include information such as medications prescribed, tests you receive and other important information provided by your doctor. If you're unable to do this, ask a friend or family member to do this for you.
- Bring someone with you to write important information down. Often, our family members or other care providers may ask important questions that can assist in future decisions about your care.



Ask

- If you do not understand your diagnosis or something your doctor or health care provider has told you, ask them to explain it again or in another way.
- Ask what you can or need to do to alleviate symptoms or make your condition better.
- Ask someone to be your health advocate to take notes, ask questions and if needed, make decisions on your behalf.
- If you are prescribed a medication, ensure you understand what the medicine is for, how you are supposed to take it and any possible side effects.
- Make sure your doctor's prescriptions are legible and that you know the name of the drug prescribed.
- Find out why a test or treatment is needed and how it can help you. Make sure you know what is involved and what the expected outcomes are.
- Find out when and how you will get the results of tests or procedures. If you do not get them when expected, call your doctor and ask for them.
- If you're being discharged from the hospital, ask your doctor to write down any treatment plans or instructions you will need at home. This information should be shared with your family doctor as well.

Safety and Awareness

- Wash your hands when you visit the hospital or other health care environments and ask your doctor or health care provider to do the same.
- Be aware of your surroundings in hospitals or other health care settings. Spills or equipment can cause you to slip or fall.

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This handout has been adapted from the Canadian Patient Safety Institute's *Tips for Patients and Families*. www.patientsafetyinstitute.ca

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