

Staying Safe in the Hospital

Bridgeport Hospital Patient Education

Communication

Communication is the most important aid to patient safety. If you are talking regularly with the people who are caring for you, you may be able to clear up a misunderstanding before it creates a problem. For example, maybe you are allergic to something and it isn't written down in your medical record. Feel free to ask questions whenever you are not clear about something. Ask questions if you are not sure why something is being done or if you are just plain curious.

You have the right to be well informed, well cared for and safe. You also have the right to ask for a second opinion or even a transfer to another hospital if you do not feel safe.

- If you have questions or concerns about your care or safety, talk with your nurse, the unit's nurse manager or your physician. If you still have concerns, call Patient Relations **(384-3704)**.
- When you go home, make sure you are clear about discharge instructions, including medications and the need for a follow-up visit. Be sure you are given a phone number to call if you have questions.
- Ask for an interpreter if you are deaf or hearing impaired, or if English is not your primary language.
- Don't be afraid to challenge and be assertive. A confident caregiver will appreciate and understand your need to know.

Minimizing Infections

Germs and bacteria exist at home, at work, and in hospitals. All hospitals work hard to prevent you from getting an infection while you are in the hospital. How can patients help?

- Remind your nurses, physicians and therapists to wash their hands or wear gloves before examining you or giving you medicine.



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- Ask friends or relatives who have colds, respiratory symptoms or other contagious illnesses not to visit you or anyone in the hospital. Minimize visits from children under 12, as they frequently have colds or other infections.
- Flu or pneumonia vaccines can help prevent illnesses in elderly or high-risk patients. Please get a vaccination if it is recommended in the hospital.
- Let your nurse know if gowns and linens are soiled.

Some patients are on “isolation precautions,” usually for their protection if they are in a weakened state or to protect others from something infectious the patient is carrying.

- If you are on “isolation,” understand what your isolation means and what you should expect from the hospital staff or visitors. Gloves, gowns and masks are sometimes appropriate, depending on the illness.

Reducing Medication Errors

- Ask your nurse about your medications—what they are, what they do, when they are given and their side effects. Let your nurse know if your medications are overdue or look different.
- Make sure your doctor or nurse knows if you have any allergies or previous reactions to drugs, food, latex, etc.
- Do not bring medications from home, unless requested by your doctor or hospital staff.
- Be sure to tell your doctor and nurse about other drugs you are taking (even vitamins, herbal remedies or over-the-counter medicine).
- For more information on how to reduce medication errors, ask for a free copy of Bridgeport Hospital’s fact sheet called “How to Avoid Medication Errors.” Just call **1-888-357-2396** for a copy.



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Falls

Most falls occur when patients try to get out of bed on their own, usually to go to the bathroom. Don't ever be embarrassed to ask for help.

How can you help prevent falls?

- Always ask for assistance from the nursing staff, especially at night.
- Keep your call button near you.
- Make sure there is adequate light to see, and keep your eyeglasses within reach.
- Wear slippers with rubber soles to prevent slipping.
- Don't feel like a burden if you need to ask for help frequently. Sometimes people take medications that cause them to use the bathroom more often than they normally would. This can't be avoided and should never be a cause for embarrassment. If possible, call for help before the need to get up and move becomes urgent.
- Point out any fluids or obstructions on the floor to anyone involved in your care.

Equipment/treatment errors

Well-informed patients can assist doctors, nurses and other hospital workers in avoiding mistakes.

How can you help prevent or minimize errors caused by equipment during treatment?

- Find out what you should expect from any equipment being used on or around you. How it is supposed to sound or act, and what it is supposed to do for you? This way you can question anything that seems unusual or different from what you were told. The same questions should be asked for any treatment you get. You may want to ask a family member or friend to listen with you when staff members explain a diagnosis, treatment plan, test results or discharge plans. It is hard to take everything in when you are scared or have been given a lot of information in a short time.



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- When getting into or out of a wheelchair, make sure the brakes are locked.
- Check the information on your hospital ID bracelet to make sure your name and a special number (your medical record number) are on it. Two patients can have the same name but no one else will have your medical record number. Make sure all staff members check it before any procedure or test. If your bracelet comes off, ask someone to get you another one. You should have your identification bracelet on at all times.
- Write down questions that you want to ask the staff about your procedure, treatment and medications when the questions come into you head. If you haven't written your questions down, you may not remember what you wanted to ask when the time comes.

Other tips

- As a patient at Bridgeport Hospital, you have chosen a teaching hospital, where specialists and sub-specialists, residents and fellows are available around the clock to care for you. You may have more faces and names to get used to, but you also have more people watching over you.
- Pay careful attention to where you put your dentures, hearing aids and glasses—they are all important to your safety and they are the most commonly lost items in hospitals. Put them in a special container with your name on it, if possible.
- Make sure the nurse call-button on your bed works and you know how to use it.
- Do not bring in food or medications, even over-the counter ones, from outside the hospital, unless approved by your nurse or doctor.

Continue Safe Healthcare Practices at Home

Even after you have had a safe hospital experience, continue your awareness of safe healthcare practices at home.

- Communicate with your doctors and druggists. Ask questions, and write down what they say.



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- You can get bed side-rails at home if you need them.
- Keep a phone or a bell near your bed if you might need help.
- Never smoke in bed.
- Be extra cautious if you have oxygen equipment at home. Oxygen feeds fires and greatly increases the risk of fire.
- If you have medical equipment that needs to be plugged in, use a grounded or three-prong connector. Don't use extension cords.

If You Still Have Questions or Concerns

If you have any questions or concerns, please call **203-384-3704** to speak with a Patient Relations representative.

For a referral to an expert physician, call Bridgeport Hospital Physician Referral, 24/7, at **1-888-357-2396**.

Bridgeport Hospital would like to acknowledge that much of this patient safety material came from the Institute for Safe Medication Use in Warminster, Penn., and the American Society of Health System Pharmacists.

