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**PURCHASER TOOLKIT**

***What You Can Do To Stay Safe***

**Medication safety**

Medication safety improvement is a top priority for hospitals. You and your family can play a role in helping hospitals improve on medication safety.

*What to do:*

* Bring all the medicines you are currently taking so that your health care team can review them. Don’t forget over-the-counter medications, dietary supplements and herbal remedies. Make sure your care team knows about any allergies to medications.
* Bring a family member or friend to the hospital with you. This way, even when you are not feeling well, this person can be alert, ask questions, provide important information, and step in if there are any problems.
* Some discomfort can be expected, but it is important to let someone know about an unexpected response to medication, which could help flag a potential problem or error in your care.
* Make sure your care team checks your hospital wristband before giving you medication.

**Keep children safe in a hospital**

Children, just like adults, are vulnerable when they are in the hospital. Protecting them from harm is an important role for a parent.

*What to do:*

* Ask the health care team about each aspect of your child’s care. Knowing what is expected can help you provide an extra pair of eyes and ears.
* Respect all safety signs and messages. Behaviors such as washing your hands, making sure a security door is shut, or not allowing children to run down the halls, can help protect patients from harm.
* Share concerns and remain an active participant in the health care team. There are effective ways to show concern and participate while not disrupting care processes. Inviting the staff to engage you as a partner is a good first step.

**Preventing falls**

Falls in hospitals are a significant problem and patients of all ages are vulnerable to them, especially the elderly. Falls often happen when patients who shouldn’t move by themselves try to get up to use the restroom.

*What to do:*

* Use your call button to ask for help in getting to the restroom or to walk around the hallway
* Wear non-slip socks or footwear that fit well.
* Lower the bed height and side rails.
* Talk to your health care team if your medicine makes you feel unsteady or dizzy. If you are sleepy, light-headed, sluggish or confused, ask about getting a different medication so you feel more like yourself.

**Helping hospitalized family members**

As a family member or loved one of a hospitalized patient, you are an integral member of the health care team. The more informed you are about their care, the better!

*What to do:*

* Explain early on that you are there to help your family member and are part of the team caring for them.
* Be present for rounds, shift changes and any major conferences with the care team. Take notes for you and for your family member.
* Arrange with other loved ones to tag team staying with the patient. If you are exhausted, you will not be as helpful as another, well-rested family member. Let the care team know who will be there in your place, especially if the person is staying overnight.
* Visit the hospital library to get accurate, reliable information on the patient’s problem. A librarian can help point you to reputable websites for disease and treatment information, and provide you with reading materials you might not be able to get online. Your public library can help with this too.

**Talking with Your Doctor about Safety**

Talking to your doctor can be challenging. Sometimes it feels like he or she doesn’t have time to talk to you, or maybe you’re embarrassed about a certain question. But it’s important that you prepare, listen carefully, and speak up when you need to.

*What to do:*

* Be prepared. Before your visit, think about and write down any questions you may have.
* Ask questions when you are unsure of what you are being told, or when some something unexpected happens.
* Be alert and say something. During your stay, you or companion should take notes to keep track of what’s happening. For example, check to see if each and every person caring for you washes their hand first

**What is a patient advocate?**

When you are a patient, you’re not on top of your game. It is a good idea to have a designated person who can help you manage your care. A patient or health care advocate watches out for you while you are in the hospital. This allows you to focus on recovering and reduces the stress felt by your family members, allowing them to offer their full support. Talk to your doctor to see if your hospital has a patient advocate.

**Other Patient Resources**

In addition to using the **Leapfrog** **Hospital Safety Grade** as a resource in choosing a hospital, there are several other websites you can utilize to find information about your care:

[**Leapfrog Hospital Survey Results**](http://www.leapfroggroup.org/compare-hospitals)

[**CMS Hospital Compare**](http://www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov/)

[**Why Not The Best**](http://www.whynotthebest.org/)

[**Consumer Report**](http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/health/doctors-and-hospitals/index.htm)**s**

[**HealthGrades**](http://www.healthgrades.com/)

[**U.S. News and World Report**](http://health.usnews.com/best-hospitals/rankings)

[**Amino**](https://amino.com/)

[**Surgeon Ratings by Consumers' Checkbook**](http://www.checkbook.org/surgeonratings/)

[**Propublica Surgeon Scorecard**](https://projects.propublica.org/surgeons/)

For more resources, check out <http://www.leapfroggroup.org/hospital-choice/resources-and-tools>