

# ***Patient Safety Tips***

## **WHAT YOU CAN DO TO CONTRIBUTE TO A POSITIVE HEALTH CARE EXPERIENCE**

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### **GENERAL THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN IT COMES TO THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM:**

- SPEAK UP if you have questions or concerns. You have a right to question anyone involved in your care.
- Tell your health care provider what language you prefer to speak, or if you need an interpreter.
- Ask a family member or friend to be with you as your advocate, to speak up if you cannot and to be an extra set of ears.
- ALWAYS put all your questions in writing. Tell your health care practitioner at the beginning of your visit that you have x number of questions.
- Make sure that someone (such as your personal doctor) is in charge of your care.
- Be involved in the DECISION-MAKING process. Ask about ALTERNATIVES.
- ALWAYS ask for lab and other test results. Don't assume that no news is good news.
- Get a copy of lab and test results.
- Find out why a test or treatment is needed.
- Find out how the test or treatment will help you.
- Be sure that ALL health care professionals who are involved in your care have important information about you.
- DON'T ASSUME everyone knows everything they need to know. Be an active member of your health care team.

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### **"I'M ALLERGIC TO...":**

- Tell your health care providers (doctor, dentist, nurse practitioner) about medication allergies you have or have had in the past.
- Tell your health care providers about adverse or unexpected reactions you have had to medications.
- Check your medical records to make sure they reflect all of this important information.

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### **ASK YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER QUESTIONS ABOUT NEW MEDICATIONS:**

- What is this medicine for?
- How am I supposed to take it?
- How long should I take it?
- What side effects might occur?
- What should I do if I experience side effects?
- Is it safe to take this with my current medications, vitamins, supplements, herbs?
- What foods/drinks/activities should I avoid while I take this?
- Get written information about side effects.
- Make sure you can read the prescription your health care provider gives you.



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**TELL YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER ABOUT ALL MEDICATIONS YOU ARE TAKING AND ANY COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE YOU ARE USING:**

- Place all your medications, vitamins, supplements and herbs into a bag and take them to your doctor's office. (Your doctor will be able to look for things that interact unfavorably with each other, or reduce the effects of one another.)
  - Prescription medications
  - Over-the-counter medications
  - Vitamins/supplements/herbs

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**ASK THE PHARMACIST QUESTIONS IN PERSON OR BY PHONE:**

- What is this medication used for?
- How am I supposed to take it?
- How long will I be on this medication?
- What side effects might occur?
- What should I do if I experience side effects?
- Is it safe to take this with my other medications, vitamins, supplements, herbs?
- What foods/drinks/activities should I avoid while I take this?
- What is your advice on the best device to measure liquid medications?
- How should I store this medication? Does it need to be refrigerated?



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**HOSPITALIZATION COMING UP? DO YOUR HOMEWORK!**

- Look for a hospital where many patients have had the same procedure or surgery you need. (You can use the Aetna Navigator™ Hospital Comparison Tool to find this information.)
- If you have a choice, choose the hospital that has the most experience with the procedure or surgery you need.

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**WHAT CAN I DO WHILE I AM IN THE HOSPITAL FOR MY PROCEDURE?**

- Before getting blood, treatment or medication, ask the health care professional to check your ID bracelet.
- Ask about ANY new medication you may receive. Make sure it is what your doctor ordered.
- Ask the health care workers who have direct contact with you if they washed their hands each time they enter your room.

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**IF YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE SURGERY:**

- Be sure that you, your doctor and your surgeon all agree on EXACTLY what will be done.
- Ask to make sure that EVERY person involved in your operation knows WHO you are, WHAT operation you are having and on what SIDE of your body.
- Ask health care workers to check your ID bracelet before you receive any blood, medication or treatment.
- Ask the surgeon to mark the correct and incorrect sides of your body with a magic marker.

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**LEARN ABOUT YOUR CONDITION/TREATMENTS AND HOSPITALS:**

- Ask a lot of questions.
- Call our Informed Health® Line at 1-800-556-1555.
- Visit Aetna Navigator™ at <http://www.aetna.com>.
- Visit IntelliHealth® at <http://www.intelihealth.com>.
- Visit the National Institutes of Health online at <http://www.nih.gov>.
- Visit the Leapfrog Group at <http://www.leapfroggroup.org/>



## REFERENCES

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