

Your Health Care Be Involved



OHA Patient Safety
Support Service

www.oha.com/patientsafetytips



President's Greetings:

“Your Health Care - Be Involved” is an initiative developed by the Ontario Hospital Association’s (OHA) Patient Safety Support Service with support from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Founded in 1924 as an independent, non-profit organization, the OHA is the voice of Ontario’s hospitals. Through initiatives like “Your Health Care - Be Involved”, the OHA is shaping the future of the health care system, fostering excellence and advocating for quality health care.

This brochure provides you with five tips that you can use to make the most of every visit to your doctor, the hospital or any other health care provider. By taking an active role in your care, you are taking an active role in your health.

Included in this brochure is a tear-away wallet card and summary sheet for you to write down all the information you need to know before you go home from your appointment or hospital stay. The brochure is available in 13 other languages and can be downloaded at www.oha.com/patientsafetytips

We hope you find this information useful. If you have any questions regarding this brochure, please contact the OHA at 416-205-1300.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hilary Short". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Hilary Short
President and CEO



1

Be involved in your health care. Speak up if you have questions or concerns about your care.

One of the keys to getting the best health care is to be an active member of your health care team. This means taking part and being involved in every decision about your care. This also means asking a member of your health care team questions, so that you can make informed choices. It means coming prepared for your medical treatment and knowing what to do when you go home. And it means getting support from friends and family if you need it.

Getting support from family, friends, and others

It is often helpful to bring a family member or friend with you when you talk to your health care team. If you need an interpreter, ask in advance if there will be one there, or bring someone who can interpret for you.

What you should know

You should understand as much as you can about any:

- medical problem you have (your diagnosis)
- treatment or procedure that you will have
- medicine you should take and how to take it

Asking questions

Before you see your health care team, plan the questions you want to ask and write them down if you can. When you ask the questions, you may not understand the answers you get the first time. It is fine to ask again. You can say, “I’m not sure I understand what you said. Can you explain that to me again?” Also, ask where you can go for more information.

Please see the back of this brochure for examples

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Tell a member of your health care team about your past illnesses and your current health condition.

You are the one who knows the most about your health. Tell the members of your health care team everything you can, even if you think they already know, and even if you think it is not important.

Tell them if:

- you are not feeling well right now or have been sick lately
- you are taking any medicine
- you have had surgery or recent visits to the hospital
- you have seen another doctor or gone somewhere else for health care
- you have an ongoing illness like diabetes or heart disease
- there is an illness that runs in your family, such as high blood pressure, asthma, or cancer
- you have a history of tobacco, drug, or alcohol use





3

Bring all of your medicines with you when you go to the hospital or to a medical appointment.

Some medicines combine with each other in your body and produce bad reactions. To protect you, your health care team must know about everything you take. This includes the drugs you take with a doctor's prescription. It also includes other medicines you buy, such as:

- vitamins
- herbs and herbal remedies
- food supplements
- “over the counter” or non-prescription medicine you buy at the drugstore

When you are going to the hospital or to a medical appointment, put all of your medicines in a bag and take them with you. Always keep your medicine in the bottle it came in.

If you cannot bring the medicines with you, another good thing to do is to keep a list of everything you take. Keep this list up to date and bring this list with you when you go to the hospital or to a medical appointment. Your doctor and pharmacist can help you make this list.

Be sure to tell a member of your health care team if you get prescriptions from more than one doctor. Work with your team to keep your medicines up to date, so that you stop taking anything you no longer need.



Tell a member of your health care team if you have ever had an allergic or bad reaction to any medicine or food.

If you get sick, your health care team may have to act fast. Before they give you any medicine, they need to know if you could have a bad reaction to it. That's why you should tell them in advance about any allergy or reaction you have ever had to any medicine or food.

Reactions can include rashes, headaches, breathing trouble, and feeling sick. Because some medicines have food in them (such as the eggs used in the flu shot), be sure to talk about your food allergies too. Tell a member of your team right away if a new medicine makes you feel unwell. If you do not know if you have allergies, you can get tested.



Some people have reactions to anaesthetics - the drugs used to put them to sleep or stop pain during surgery. If you have ever had a reaction, tell your family and your health care team in case you need surgery again.

Don't wait until you get sick to tell people about your allergies. Some people wear an ID bracelet such as MedicAlert™. This tells the health care team about your allergies when you can't tell them yourself.



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Make sure you know what to do when you go home from the hospital or from your medical appointment.

When you are getting ready to go home from the hospital or after a medical treatment ask as many questions as you can to make sure you understand:

- what treatment you received
- whether you will have to pick up a prescription before you go home
- what kind of transportation you will need to get home
- the type of care you will need at home and if you will need someone to stay with you
- what symptoms to watch for and who to call if something does not feel right
- whether someone will be making a plan with you for home care
- what medicine you must take, how to take it, and any side effects
- what foods you should eat and not eat
- when you can go back to normal activities, such as work, school, exercise, and driving
- what follow-up appointments you will need and who will make them

You can write this information down or it may be helpful to have a family member or friend with you. They can help you to write down everything you should know about your care. Included in this brochure is a summary form that you can use to write down important information about your care at home.

Here are some good ways to ask questions:

Deciding about having a test or a treatment:

- “Can you tell me more about my medical problem?”
- “What does this test or treatment involve?”
- “Could you explain it in a different way?” (such as drawing a picture)
- “What is the purpose of this test or treatment?”
- “Are there any other options?”
- “What should I do to get ready?”

Planning for going home:

- “What should I do when I go home?”
- “What should I tell my family about my care?”
- “Can I eat the same foods that I used to?”
- “When can I go back to work?”

When you get a prescription for medicine:

- “What is this medicine?”
- “What does the medicine do?”
- “What are the side effects? When do they appear?”
- “How many pills do I take and how often?”

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