



Quick Guide to Patient Safety

You have just been asked to take a friend or family member to the hospital and you're not sure what to do. Here is a "Quick Guide" using the PULSE patient safety tips:

→ Stay calm and remember the patient is always in charge. All questions and responses should be addressed to the patient. Do not answer for the patient unless asked to.

→ Be prepared to listen and take notes. Before the doctor / nurse leaves the room make sure you and the patient understand what will happen and be done. If you don't understand, ASK again!

Falls: If the patient is a fall risk, be sure the staff knows this. Falls are a leading cause of hospital injury.

Infections: Bring disinfectant wipes to wipe down the bedrail, TV remote, telephone, doorknobs and anything else people (including you) may touch.

1.7 million people will contract a hospital acquired infection this year.

Ask gently for anyone about to touch the patient if they washed their hands and let them know it would make you feel better if you saw them do it. (Antibacterial gel is OK).

Literacy: Don't assume the patient can read or write. Ask to fill out the forms with the patient. The patient may also be too distracted to read instructions.

- Upon admissions, ask to read the forms the patient will be asked to sign while they are completing other forms. This way, the patient won't be encouraged to sign without reading.
- If you do not understand the instructions, chances are the patient won't either. Ask again. Look for confusion from the patient – you must speak up for them.

Medication: All medication should be in an original wrapper. Request all medications come to the patient wrapped (not in plastic cups with unmarked pills). Staff need to tell the patient what the medications are and for. Also verify name and medication on IV Bag.

Medication errors injure 1.5 million people annually.

Surgery: Be sure the site of surgery is marked WITH the patient and verified BEFORE surgery by the doctor. (Every week there are still 40 wrong site surgeries according to The Joint Commission)

- Ask about antibiotics given one hour before surgery.
- Keep patient warm, ask for a warm blanket. (Reduces the chance of infection)

At discharge, be sure you can read and understand all paperwork and instructions. Get phone number to call for any questions or problems that may arise. Ask the best way to reach your doctor.

Items to bring: Pad (notebook) and 2 pens. List the patient's insurance, family members, important friends with contact information, doctors, allergies, past procedures or surgeries, unusual eating habits (kosher, vegetarian, etc.) List all medications, vitamins, herbs. Antibacterial wipes, something to read and money.

About PULSE:

PULSE is a nonprofit 501 (c) 3 grassroots organization dedicated to raising awareness about patient safety and reducing medical errors through advocacy, education, and support. We work to empower the public to make informed decisions, increase effective communication and respect between healthcare providers and the public, and create community partnerships that will foster and ultimately lead to safer healthcare environments. Founded 1997