



Be a Partner in  
Safe Patient Care

# Safe Patient Care

1. Be an active partner on the health care team — ask questions.
2. Tell us about your allergies.
3. Bring a current list of your medications with you to your appointment or hospital visit.
4. If you are admitted to the hospital and bring your medications with you, send the medications home with a family member.
5. Expect everyone to check your name and date of birth, as well as your armband and medical record number.
6. Clean hands prevent the spread of infection. Remind all caregivers to clean their hands.
7. Ask for assistance if you feel weak, sleepy, unsteady or dizzy.
8. Know what to expect before, during and after your surgery.
9. Be sure you know how to safely take your medications.
10. Understand your treatment plan for when you are at home.
11. Know when to call the rapid response team if you are in the hospital.

## How You Can Be a Partner in Your Own Safe Patient Care

### TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE

Everyone has a role in making health care safe. That includes doctors, nurses, pharmacists, other City of Hope staff ... and most important, **you**. It takes all of us working together to make sure you are safe.

Why are we asking you, as a patient, to think about the safety of your care? Too many patients in the United States are harmed by medical errors that are avoidable. Keeping you safe and well is City of Hope's highest priority. As members of the health care team, patients and families can play a vital role in ensuring safe care.

As a patient, you can make your care safer by being actively involved in your care. This means that you:

- Ask questions if you are unsure or have any concerns.
- Share information with your caregivers.
- Take part in decisions about your care.
- Report any concerns that you have about your care, treatment, services or safety.

Research shows that patients who are actively involved in their care are likely to experience better results. Helping you understand your role as a partner is part of City of Hope's effort to provide you with the safest care possible. This guide will describe steps that you can take.

# 11 ways you can help keep your own care safe

## 1. Ask questions.

We want you to speak up and ask questions. Please tell us if you have any questions or concerns about your care, such as why you are receiving a specific medication, what the side effects of that medicine might be or why a specific test or X-ray is going to be performed. **You may find it helpful to have a family member or friend with you.** He or she can help you think of questions and remember any instructions you receive. **Please write your questions down so that you won't forget to ask them.**

If something doesn't seem quite right, **please speak up.** Make sure that caregivers hear about anything that doesn't seem "normal" to you.

## 2. Tell us if you are allergic to any foods or medications.

Don't assume that everyone knows every detail about you, your background and your care. Be sure to tell our staff about any allergies or reactions that you have had to medications or foods in the past. Tell members of your care team about any information that you think might be important.

## 3. Make sure that your doctor, nurse and pharmacist know about all the medications, herbs and vitamins you are taking. Carry a list of your medications with you.

Make a list of all the medications that you are taking, including the dose and how often you take them, and update the list when your doctor(s) begins, stops or changes any of your medications. Include both prescription medications and over-the-counter products, such as aspirin, ibuprofen or other pain relievers, herbs and dietary supplements, such as vitamins. Be sure to update your medication list whenever you start or stop a medication; this includes herbs and over-the-counter medications. Keep a current list with you.

## 4. If you are admitted to the hospital and bring any of your medications with you, send them home with a family member.

If family is not available, give your medications to your nurse, who will then give them to the pharmacy for safekeeping. Do not take your own medications while in the hospital unless there is a specific written order by your doctor. Family members must not bring your medications to you unless specifically requested to do so by your doctor or nurse.

### SHOW YOUR ARMBAND

*Make sure that staff members have checked your name and birth date, which are listed on your armband.*



## 5. Expect every person providing you care to check your name and date of birth. Your medical record number on your armband may also be checked when you receive medication and blood products or when caregivers collect a specimen from you (such as blood or urine).

Show your armband to everyone who provides care to you to make sure you have been identified properly. Ask staff whether they have matched your name, birth date and medical record number with the printed labels placed on the medications and blood products given to you, or any specimens collected from you.

## 6. Remind all caregivers to clean their hands.

Washing hands with soap and water or disinfecting hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizers is an important way to prevent the spread of infections in hospitals and clinics. Yet, in many health care organizations, staff members do not always clean their hands or clean them thoroughly enough. Studies have shown that workers clean their hands more often when patients **ask staff** whether they have cleaned their hands. Family members can also prevent infections by cleaning their hands before entering and leaving their loved one's room.

## 7. Prevent yourself from falling in your room or elsewhere in the hospital or clinic.

Even though you may never have fallen before, a fall can still occur in the future, especially in the hospital. To prevent falling, be extremely careful when you get up from bed. **Most important, we want you to ask for help from the nursing staff before moving out of bed to the bathroom or elsewhere.** This is especially true if you feel weak, sleepy, unsteady or dizzy. Being in an unfamiliar setting can be disorienting, especially at night, or when you've been given medication to sleep or for pain, making it easier to fall.

**We need your help** to prevent falls. Please do not ever feel that you are "bothering" us by asking for help — we expect and WANT you to call us when you are getting up from bed or if you feel unsteady in any sense at all. Again, PLEASE call us to help you in getting up from bed. This is extremely important for you and to all of us.

## 8. If you are having surgery, make sure that you and your doctor agree on exactly what will be done and you are clear on what will happen.

### Ask your doctor:

- Who will take charge of my care in the hospital or clinic?
- Who will be operating on me?
- Exactly what will you/the surgeon be doing? Why?
- How long will it take?
- What will happen after the surgery?
- How can I expect to feel during recovery?

Although rare in the United States, there have been instances where surgery was performed on the wrong side or area of the body (for example, an operation being done on the left knee instead of the right). Such mistakes are completely preventable. We always go through a long checklist to make sure that everyone in the operating room understands and knows all details of the surgery prior to the start of the operation. For example, your surgeon will mark the area of the body to be operated on before the surgery, and many questions will be asked of you to ensure that you are the correct patient, that the correct operation will be performed, and that the correct side and correct area of the body will be operated upon. While all of these questions may seem repetitive and strange to you, it is important that we go through this checklist and important that you ask about the process if you have any questions at all. Our automatic checklists are designed to ensure your safety.

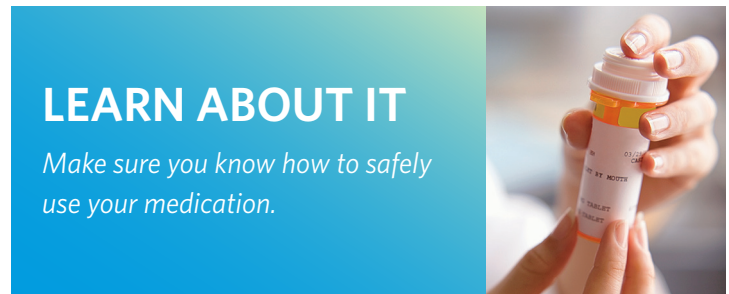
**9. Ask for information about your medications in words you can understand, both when the doctor initially prescribes your medications and when you receive them from the pharmacist or nurse.**

**Here are examples of questions that you should ask:**

- Will you write down the name of the medication for me?
- What is the medication for?
- How and when am I supposed to take it? For how long?
- Should I take the medication with food or on an empty stomach?
- What side effects are likely to occur? What do I do if they occur?
- Is this medication safe to take with the other medications or dietary supplements (such as vitamins or herbs) I am currently taking?
- Is there any type of food, drink or activity that I should avoid while taking this medication?

If you have questions about the directions on your medication labels, please ask the pharmacist, doctor or nurse.

Medication labels can be hard to understand, so it's important to clear up questions. For example, ask if "four doses daily" means taking a dose every six hours around the clock or just during regular waking hours, such as "linking" the pill with breakfast, lunch, dinner and bedtime.



Ask for written information about the side effects your medications could cause. If you know what might happen, you will be better prepared to recognize a side effect and respond to it. Report any problem with the medications right away to your doctor or nurse, and get help before it gets worse.

**10. Make sure you understand the treatment plan that you will use at home.**

**This includes learning about:**

- Your medications
- Any follow-up appointments you have or will need to schedule
- How you can contact your doctor, nurse, nurse practitioner or physician assistant
- How to connect with home care agencies, if needed
- When you can return to your regular activities

**11. If you are in the hospital, you or your family can call the rapid response team by dialing 55.**

City of Hope is dedicated to providing excellent service to patients and their families. As a result, we have implemented a medical Rapid Response team comprised of hospital staff trained to address emergencies.

With this in mind, we encourage patients and family members to call for immediate help if they become concerned with a change in the patient's medical condition and the health care team has not addressed the change. This empowers patients and family members to access care, decrease anxiety and improve patient safety. The rapid response program is directed at improving our response to changing medical conditions and increasing communication between the patient's family members and the health care team.

City of Hope’s rapid response team responds immediately to attend to a patient after a call has been placed by the patient or a family member to report a patient’s worsening condition. Communication among the patient, family and other health care team members is still critical to the patient’s care — the rapid response team simply provides a safety net in case of an emergency. The team is available at all times.

**Before calling the rapid response team:**

- The patient or family member should communicate the change in condition to the patient’s primary nurse.
- If the problem continues, contact the charge nurse to call the patient’s doctor.
- If the problem has still not been addressed satisfactorily and needs immediate medical attention, consider calling the rapid response team.

**WHEN TO CALL:**

- If there is a noticeable medical change in the patient’s condition that the health care team is not recognizing or addressing
- If there is a noticeable change in the patient’s condition and the health care team cannot be reached

**HOW TO CALL:**

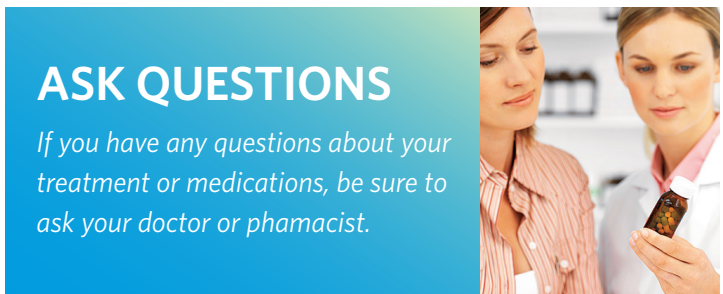
- Dial 55 from any hospital telephone.
- Identify the call as a request for the rapid response team.
- Give the patient’s name, location and reason for the request.
- If calling from the patient’s room, turn on the call light.

***Upon receiving the call, the operator will immediately activate the rapid response team by paging the appropriate team members. The team will respond to assess the situation and treat the patient as necessary.***

**HOW DO I REPORT CONCERNS ABOUT MY CARE, TREATMENT, SERVICES OR SAFETY?**

**We want to know if you have any concerns about your care, treatment, services or safety.** We take your concerns very seriously and want to take action on them. Please report any concern that you have to your City of Hope doctor, nurse or social worker.

If you prefer, you may call the Patient Advocate line at 626-218-2285, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, or feel free to leave a voicemail to discuss your concern. We also encourage you to call the Patient Advocate line if you already shared your concern with someone and further action is needed. To discuss your concern with a person other than your care team on weekends or evenings, you may call City of Hope’s operator (dial “0”) and ask to be connected with the house supervisor.



**ASK QUESTIONS**  
*If you have any questions about your treatment or medications, be sure to ask your doctor or pharmacist.*

We will do our utmost to make sure that we address any concern that you have about your care, treatment, services or safety. If you desire, you may also share your concern with the Joint Commission, the organization

that assesses how well health care facilities meet patient safety and quality standards. You may contact the Joint Commission via email at [complaint@jointcommission.org](mailto:complaint@jointcommission.org) or by mail at the following address: Office of Quality Monitoring, The Joint Commission, One Renaissance Blvd., Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181.

## **BECOME WELL-INFORMED**

**Learn about your condition and treatment by asking your doctor, nurse and/or pharmacist and by using other reliable sources, such as published medical literature.**

City of Hope has a wealth of information resources to help you be an active partner in your care. Let your doctor or nurse know if you would like written information to help you understand more about your condition and/or treatment. Ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist for information about medications, possible side effects and what to do if you experience any problems.

## **SHERI & LES BILLER PATIENT AND FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER**

The Sheri & Les Biller Patient and Family Resource Center is a warm, inviting space where patients and families can access resources, education, information and support throughout treatment. Centrally located on the Duarte campus, the center offers reliable health information in multiple languages on diagnosis, symptom management, treatment options, coping and caregiving, as well as a computer center, educational classes and workshops, wellness programs, support and problem-solving groups, and more.

The center's fully integrated team of supportive care experts, including physicians, nurses, patient navigators, health educators, clinical social workers, spiritual care chaplains, child life educators and more, are available to partner with you in your care, address your questions and concerns, and help provide comprehensive support from day one.

### **Sheri & Les Biller Patient and Family Resource Center**

**Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

**626-218-CARE (2273) or**

**[BillerResourceCenter@coh.org](mailto:BillerResourceCenter@coh.org)**

**[CityofHope.org/billercenter](http://CityofHope.org/billercenter)**

**Remember: You are the most important member of the health care team! Your care and safety depends upon all of us.**