
Security and safety at hospital

Summary

- Hospitals do not tolerate physical or verbal aggression or abuse towards staff, patients, family members or visitors.
 - Another part of keeping patients safe in hospital is making sure they get the right treatment and do not pick up infections, have falls, take the wrong medication or develop pressure sores.
-

Health services are committed to providing a safe and secure environment for patients, staff and visitors. Hospital security arrangements keep patients, staff and visitors safe from inappropriate behaviour such as violence and aggression.

Safety and security in hospital

To keep staff, patients and visitors safe, hospitals use a range of security measures, including the use of CCTV cameras, duress alarms for staff members and electronic access control systems for doorways. Some hospitals also employ security staff.

Hospital visitors and safety

As a hospital visitor, it is important that you respect visiting hours and rest periods for patients during the day. If you want to bring a gift or something for a loved one, check with the hospital to make sure it is okay. Some wards do not allow pot plants, flowers or food.

Sometimes, seeing a loved one in pain or suffering can be distressing. Always be courteous to hospital staff, other patients and visitors. Physical or verbal abuse towards staff, patients or other visitors will not be tolerated and you may be asked to leave if you behave like this.

Hospital security arrangements

Many hospitals have security staff and arrangements to protect patients and hospital staff to make sure they are safe.

Health services enforce a code of behaviour. They do not tolerate physical or verbal aggression, or abuse towards staff, patients, family members or visitors. Security staff or police will ask aggressive or abusive visitors to leave the hospital.

Patient safety in hospital

Another part of keeping patients safe in hospital is making sure they get the right treatment, do not pick up infections, have falls, take the wrong medication or develop pressure sores.

Identification checks

As a hospital patient, you will be asked to wear an identification (ID) band with your name and other important details around your wrist or ankle, or both. Your ID band must be worn during your entire hospital stay. This is to make sure that hospital staff can identify you easily and that you receive the right treatment and care. Staff will check your ID band before giving you any medication or treatment.

All hospital staff members have a background and identification check before they are employed by a hospital to make sure they are qualified for their role and are of good character. They must display their ID badge at all times while at the hospital.

Personal information security

All hospital staff, including your administration and medical care team, must take reasonable precautions to protect

your personal health information from:

- unauthorised access
- improper use
- disclosure
- unlawful destruction
- accidental loss.

Staff who come into contact with your personal health information must maintain the security of that information.

If you think your personal health information has been improperly used or accessed, raise your complaint with your patient liaison manager or the nurse in charge of the ward.

Infections

All hospitals have infection control procedures and policies, and staff take every precaution to avoid infections. However, the risk of infection can never be completely eliminated and some people have a higher risk of acquiring an infection than others.

Lung, wound, urinary tract and bloodstream infections can be picked up during a stay in hospital. These are called 'healthcare-associated infections'.

Some things that can help reduce the chance of getting an infection while you are in hospital include:

- washing your hands properly, especially after using the toilet
- if you have an IV drip, letting your nurse know if the site around the needle is not clean and dry
- telling your nurse if your dressings are not clean, dry and attached around any wounds you may have
- telling your nurse if tubes or catheters have moved or feel uncomfortable
- doing deep breathing exercises – the staff will instruct you. This is very important because it can help prevent a chest infection
- asking relatives or friends who have colds or are unwell, not to visit.

Falls

The risk of falling increases with age and the number of times someone has been in hospital. During your hospital stay, you may be more unsteady on your feet because of your illness or surgery, or because you are unfamiliar with your hospital environment or are taking new medication.

Falls-related injuries can include:

- minor skin abrasions
- sprains
- joint dislocation
- fractures
- head injuries.

These injuries may result in a longer hospital stay.

To reduce your risk of falls:

- Keep your personal items and the call button within reach to avoid standing and walking to get them.
- Ask for help when you need to get out of bed to use the toilet if you are feeling at all unsteady.
- Make sure your pyjamas, dressing gown and day clothes are the right length so you don't trip over them.
- Check that your slippers or other footwear fit properly and are not slippery.
- If you have to wear pressure stockings, wear slippers over them so you do not slip.
- If you need one, make sure you have an appropriate walking aid (such as a walking stick) and that you use it.

Pressure injuries

Pressure injuries are wounds that form due to ongoing pressure on an area of skin. Pressure injuries may cause pain and discomfort, resulting in a slower recovery and longer hospital stay.

If you are assessed as a high-risk patient for developing a pressure injury, hospital staff will follow a care plan to minimise your risk of developing a pressure injury.

The care plan may include:

- frequent inspection of your skin
- keeping your skin clean and dry
- making sure your nutrition and fluids are suitable
- changing your position frequently
- using a pressure-relieving device, such as a special mattress or supportive pad.

Electrical appliance checks

For your safety and to reduce potential fire risks, many hospitals will not allow you to use any personal electrical appliances such as a hair dryer, radio, mobile phone charger or docking station, until an electrician tests the item. Let hospital staff know about any appliances you have brought with you and they can arrange for the items to be tested.

Food safety

Hospitals have food safety regulations in place to prevent food contamination and to keep patients safe from food poisoning. For example, most hospitals will not allow you or your visitors to bring in food from outside the hospital that needs to be heated.

Medication safety

Hospitals have procedures to minimise the risk of patients being given the wrong medication or wrong dose. Nurses will check your ID band and the dosage instructions before giving you medication.

Do not take any other medication while you are in hospital, including herbal supplements or remedies, without the consent of your medical team. You may think that the medication is safe to take, but it could interfere with the medication your doctor has prescribed or have a negative effect on you.

Keeping your valuables safe

Theft can be an issue in hospital, so do not bring jewellery, lots of money or valuable personal items with you. It is okay to bring a small amount of cash or change for newspapers and other small necessities. Bring only the essential items that you need for your stay.

If you are admitted to hospital through the emergency department, ask a friend or relative to look after your valuables while you are being treated and to take them home. Some hospitals will accept valuable items for storage in a safe after they have been formally receipted.

Clearly label all your belongings with your full name and keep everyday items in marked cases or bags. If you wear dentures, ask a nurse for a labelled denture cup for storage. Do not wrap your dentures in a tissue or place them under your pillow, because they may get lost or damaged.

Keeping children safe in hospital

Children's hospitals and wards have procedures in place to protect the children in their care. Visitor access is limited to parents and carers after hours, and there may be visitor restrictions or limitations during the day.

Parents and carers can negotiate certain tasks of their child's care while in hospital, such as who will bathe the child and who is able to give the medication.

Children will also need to wear identity (ID) bands on their wrist or ankle, or both during their hospital stay, so they can be easily identified.

Where to get help

- Hospital staff

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:

Department of Health and Human Services

Content on this website is provided for information purposes only. Information about a therapy, service, product or treatment does not in any way endorse or support such therapy, service, product or treatment and is not intended to replace advice from your doctor or other registered health professional. The information and materials contained on this website are not intended to constitute a comprehensive guide concerning all aspects of the therapy, product or treatment described on the website. All users are urged to always seek advice from a registered health care professional for diagnosis and answers to their medical questions and to ascertain whether the particular therapy, service, product or treatment described on the website is suitable in their circumstances. The State of Victoria and the Department of Health & Human Services shall not bear any liability for reliance by any user on the materials contained on this website.

For the latest updates and more information, visit www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Copyright © 1999/2021 State of Victoria. Reproduced from the Better Health Channel (www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au) at no cost with permission of the Victorian Minister for Health. Unauthorised reproduction and other uses comprised in the copyright are prohibited without permission.