



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Health**

Patient**First**

Staying safe in hospital



Help us
to help you
in hospital



Contents

Be involved in your care	4
Identification: Right person, right place, right procedure	4
Prevent yourself from falling	5
Prevent pressure injuries	6
Prevent infection	6
Your medication	8
Speaking up if you feel unwell	9
Telling us about your care	10



Be involved in your care

During your stay, you will be cared for by different staff at different times, who will keep each other up-to-date about your care and treatment. This sharing of information is called clinical handover.

You and your carer or family members should be involved in this process so you'll know what is going on with your care and treatment.

If at any time you don't understand what is being said to you, ask the staff caring for you to repeat or explain the information in another way.

Identification: right person, right place, right procedure

Before starting any medical procedure, medical staff will make a final check to confirm:

- your name and date of birth
- any allergies or bad reactions you may have to any medicines, food, or other
- the procedure you are having
- the site on your body where the procedure is being performed (if applicable).

Ensure your consent form is correct and complete, and that the site and side of the procedure is marked on your skin using a waterproof marker.



If you see a mistake, ask for a new consent form

Prevent yourself from falling

Falls can happen easily when you are unwell, due to changes in medical conditions, medicines and unfamiliar places.

Staff will talk with you about your risk of falling and put actions in place to reduce your risk.

To help lower your risk of falling:

- wear suitable clothing and non-slip footwear with good support
- get up slowly after sitting or lying down
- be aware that you may need more assistance than usual to move around
- call staff for help if you need help moving, if you are feeling unwell, dizzy, or there are hazards in your way
- have the call bell within reach and use it to call for help – staff will get to you as quickly as possible, but they may also be caring for other patients
- get to know your hospital room, furniture, and bathroom location
- use your glasses, walking and hearing aids and keep them within easy reach
- be careful in wet areas.

If you do have a fall:

- don't try to get up by yourself
- always call for help from staff – they will try to find out what caused your fall to reduce the risk of falling again
- before you go home talk to staff caring for you about ways to reduce your risk of falling at home.

Families and carers can help by:

- letting nursing staff know when they have finished their visit
- helping keep the hospital room/bed area free of clutter
- removing belongings that are no longer required.

Prevent pressure injuries

A pressure injury is a redness, break or blister of the skin caused by constant pressure on an area of the body. They are commonly called 'bed sores'.

They can be very painful, take a long time to heal or may never heal and may affect your ability to move.

To lower your risk of getting a pressure injury, you can:

- change position in bed every 30 minutes (ask a nurse if you need help to move)
- walk around the room or ward if staff have told you it is okay to do so
- drink plenty of water and eat healthy food
- keep good posture when sitting
- check your skin for signs of redness or blistering
- moisturise your skin well.

Let nursing staff know straight away if you notice these early signs:

- redness that does not go away
- broken or blistered skin
- pain in a fixed area of your body such as heels or bottom
- tingling or numbness.

If you cannot check all of your body, ask a nurse, family member or carer to check regularly for you.

Prevent infection

When you are unwell or healing from surgery, the last thing you want is an infection that could slow your recovery and make you feel worse.

Bacteria or germs that cause infections are most commonly spread through hand contact.



Practising good hand hygiene is one way to avoid infection.
This means:

- wash your hands before eating or touching food, and after going to the toilet
- use running water and soap or an alcohol-based hand rub to clean your hands
- remind the doctors, nurses and other health staff treating you to clean their hands before they examine or treat you
- ask your visitors to clean their hands before visiting your room.

Other ways to prevent infection include:

- follow instructions on how to treat and care for any surgical or open wounds
- avoid close contact with people who may have a spreadable illness, and ask people not to visit if they are sick
- always cover your mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing and wash your hands straight after.

Your medication

It's important you keep track of your medicines at home and in hospital. Taking the right medicine at the right time will help you get well.

Using medicines in the wrong way may cause unwanted side effects.

Medicines may be:

- tablets, capsules or liquids, patches, creams and ointments
- drops and sprays for eyes, nose, ears and mouth
- inhalers and puffers
- injections or implants
- pessaries or suppositories
- vitamins and dietary supplements
- natural or herbal remedies.



Ask your nurse
before taking any
medicine on your own
during your stay

To be medicine-wise in hospital:

- bring all your current medicines to show your hospital doctor and pharmacist
- tell staff if you have had an allergic or bad reaction to any medicines or if you have trouble swallowing medicines
- tell staff straight away if you feel unwell after taking any medicine
- make sure staff check your wrist band details before they give you any medicines
- ask the staff caring for you if you think you should have received some medicines, or the medicines appear different
- make sure all medicines are explained to you before you leave hospital for home or another service
- ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist if you don't understand your medicine instructions.

Questions to ask about your medicines in hospital:

- What is this medicine for?
- Are there any possible side effects?
- Can they be taken safely with other medicines?
- How often and how much medicine do I need to take?

Speaking up if you feel unwell

Nobody knows your health like you do. You are the best person to notice any changes in your health.

Your family or carers who spend a lot of time with you may also notice changes in how you look or act, before healthcare staff notice these changes.



If you think it's urgent,
press the call bell

If you or your family or carer notice changes in your health, it's important to let the staff looking after you know as soon as possible.

Examples of things to alert staff to may include (but are not limited to):

- changes in how fast you are breathing
- noticing that you are more pale than usual
- hands or feet unusually cold or warm
- feeling unusually hot and clammy
- acting or feeling out of character
- having more pain than usual
- feeling confused, anxious, distressed or angry
- concerns that you have had different medications to usual
- feeling extra drowsy or sleepy
- feeling sick.

Telling us about your care

Letting us know what is good and what is not good about your care helps us to improve our services for everyone.

Every hospital and health service has ways for you provide feedback on your care.

You can provide feedback during and after your treatment.

If you have any concerns about the treatment you are receiving while you in our care, we want to hear from you. You can:

- talk to one of the staff that are caring for you
- talk to the hospital patient liaison officer/Aboriginal liaison officer
- ask a family member, friend, or carer to help you raise your concerns or speak on your behalf
- ask to speak to the manager of the team caring for you
- ask to talk to the manager of the hospital or service
- provide online feedback on hospital or health service websites
- complete a complaints or feedback form.



Complaints

If you are unhappy with the service, please let us know.

- Making a complaint will not affect your future care or treatment.
- Your feedback will be recorded.
- Your lodged complaint will not be included in your medical records – this information is filed separately and your privacy will be protected.
- We will contact you to let you know we have received your complaint.
- Your complaint will be investigated. This can take two to six weeks. If there are delays, we will let you know.
- You will be given the name and contact details of a person to speak during the process.
- We will let you know of the outcome by letter or telephone, unless you request otherwise. You can then respond or ask for further information if you wish.

If you are not happy with how your feedback has been addressed, please contact:

Health Consumers Council of WA provides free advice and can help you make a complaint.

Phone: 9221 3422 or Freecall 1800 620 780

Health and Disability Services Complaints Office (HaDSCO) can help you if you are not happy with what happened with your complaint. **Phone 6551 7600 or Freecall 1800 813 583 or Email mail@hadsco.wa.gov.au**

The **Mental Health Advocacy Service** also provides free, independent help to people with a mental illness to understand their rights and help you access services.

Phone 6234 6300 or Freecall 1800 999 057

On discharge you will be provided with a Going Home checklist and information to help you at home.



This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with disability.

Produced by Quality Improvement and Change Management
© Department of Health 2017

Copyright to this material is vested in the State of Western Australia unless otherwise indicated. Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part may be reproduced or re-used for any purposes whatsoever without written permission of the State of Western Australia.