

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

In hospital, make sure your health professional:

- knows if you have had an allergic or bad reaction to any medicines or if you have trouble swallowing medicines
- knows straight away if you feel unwell after taking any medicine
- checks 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.

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?

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

Examples of things to alert health professionals 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
- having more pain than usual
- feeling confused, anxious, distressed or angry
- feeling extra drowsy or sleepy.

About your care

Letting us know what is good and not so good about your care can help us to improve our services for everyone. 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 your health professional
- talk to the patient liaison officer/Aboriginal liaison officer
- ask a family member, friend, or carer to help you raise your concerns or speak on your behalf
- provide online feedback on hospital or health service websites
- complete a complaints or feedback form.

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.

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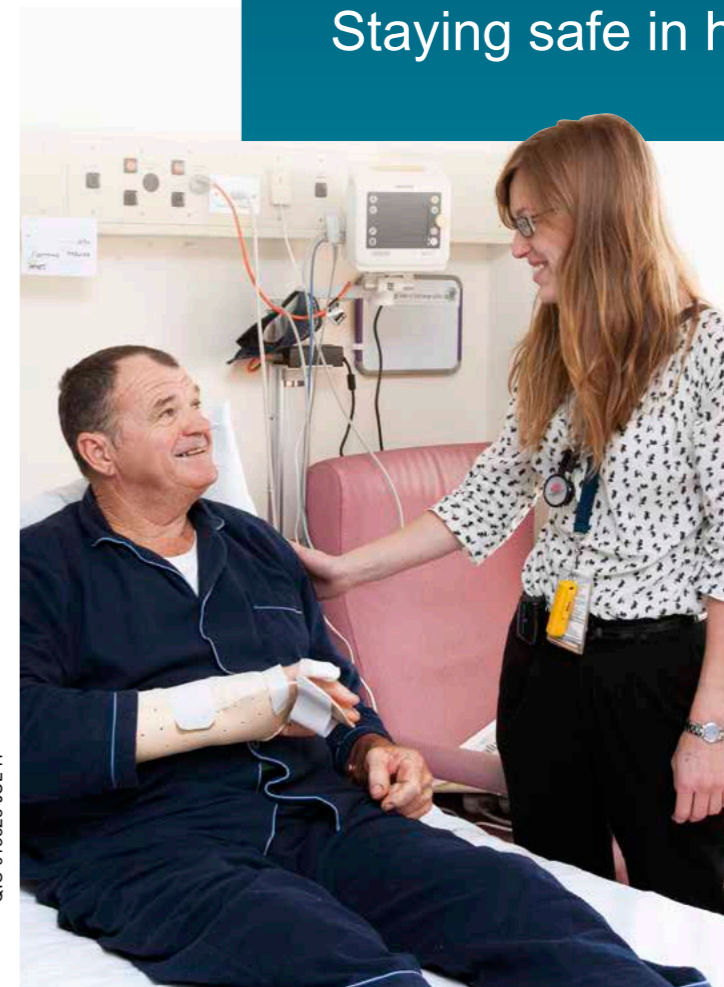
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Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Health**

PatientFirst

Staying safe in hospital



Help us
to help you
in hospital

Be involved

Your health professionals will keep each other up-to-date about your care and treatment. Be involved in this process so you'll know what is going on with your care and treatment. If you don't understand what is being said to you, ask the staff member to repeat or explain the information in another way.

Identification: right person, right place, right procedure

Before starting any medical procedure, health professionals will 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)
- your consent form is correct and complete.

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

Falls

Falls can happen easily when you are unwell, taking medicines and in unfamiliar places. Health professionals will discuss your risk of falling and put actions in place to reduce your risk, such as:

- 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 help 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
- 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.

Families and carers can help by:

- letting nursing staff know when they have finished their visit
- making sure the hospital room/bed area is 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

An infection 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
- ask your visitors to clean their hands before visiting your room.

Remember – you can remind health professionals to clean their hands before they examine or treat you.

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 – taking the right medicine at the right time will help you get well.

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.