

**P A T I E N T   S A F E T Y   F A C T   S H E E T**

**Why is healthcare safety a concern today?**

Modern medical care saves lives every day. Each year new treatments and medications are available that improve the health and well-being of Americans. Although the intention of health care professionals is to improve the health and well-being of patients, sometimes errors can occur. Good communication between patients and health care providers is essential for optimal care. Members of your health care team (e.g. physicians, nurses, therapists, nursing assistants or any health care professional involved in your care) at Greenwich Hospital are working together to make your hospital experience both safe and beneficial. It is well known that patient involvement in the plan of care is an important factor for promoting good care and preventing medical errors. This fact sheet will tell you what you can do to work with your health care team to assure a safe and beneficial hospital stay.

**What can I do to help prevent errors?**

- **Stay Informed.** . . Read about your condition and ask questions. Choose a health care provider who takes the time to answer your questions in a way that you can understand.
  
- **Keep a record of your medical history** . . . Maintain a record of your medical history, any allergies and the names of your health care providers. Keep a list of any allergies, current medications, including herbals, vitamins and over-the-counter medications with you at all times.
  
- **Become an active member of your healthcare team.** . . .
  - ✓ Share information and expect to be involved in treatment decisions.
  - ✓ Ask about treatment options and the associated risks and benefits.
  - ✓ Discuss safety concerns including discomfort with taking medications or receiving treatments.
  - ✓ Notify your team of allergies to medications or foods.
  - ✓ Ask about changes in medications, treatments or treatment schedules when leaving the hospital to go home.

## What can I do to help prevent errors (continued)?

- **Know the details of procedures, tests or surgery...** Discuss the details of procedures, tests or surgery and agree on exactly what will be done. Speak with your physician about test results. You will be asked to participate in marking your surgical site before going to surgery.
- **Involve a family member or friend.** . . Bring a family member or friend who is aware of your condition with you to medical appointments to support you in asking questions, understanding new instructions and making your preferences known.

## How can I get more information?

If you have any questions or concerns about your safety, talk to a member of your health care team. Additional patient safety resources are listed below:

- “Speak-up” Facts About Patient Safety—sponsored by the Joint Commission on Accreditation for Healthcare Organizations at [www.jcaho.org/general+public/patient+safety/](http://www.jcaho.org/general+public/patient+safety/) or (877) 223-6866
- National Patient Safety Foundation at [www.npsf.org](http://www.npsf.org) or (312) 464-4848 or fax (312) 464-4154

References: AHCPR Consumer Safety Tips: <http://www.ahcpr.gov/consumer/20tips.htm>; JCAHO Facts about Patient Safety (above); National Patient Safety Foundation: General Patient Safety Resources (above).

*For more Patient Education Fact Sheets, see the Greenwich Hospital web site at [www.greenhosp.org](http://www.greenhosp.org) and click on Patient & Visitors, then Patient Education*