



YOUR ROLE AS THE PATIENT

We are committed to patient safety and take measures to make sure your care is as safe as possible. You can also help improve your safety by taking an active role in your health care. Talking with your health care provider is a very important part of that.

TALK AND ASK QUESTIONS:

- Talk to your health care provider and other members of your health care team. Other members of your health care team may include:
 - Nurses
 - Pharmacists
 - Dieticians
 - Social workers
- Ask questions so you can understand your condition and treatment. Never be afraid to ask questions or speak up. You are an equal partner in your health care.
- Write down what you want to talk about.
- Take notes to help you remember what your health care provider wants you to do.
- Repeat, in your own words, what you think your health care provider said and ask if it is correct.
- Always tell your health care provider when you don't understand something.
- If possible, bring a family member or friend with you to help you take notes, listen and give support.

WORK WITH YOUR HEALTH CARE TEAM:

- Provide complete information to your health care team to help them care for you. Maintain a record of your medical history.
- Keep a list and tell your health care providers about:

- Allergies
- All the medicines you are taking, including over-the-counter herbals, vitamins and dietary supplements.
- Bring a list of all your medicines with you. Tell your health care team about any information you feel is important.

Be an active member of your health care team.

- Make sure the members of your health care team know who you are. Your health care team will verify your identity by checking at least two of the following: your name, your full Social Security number or your date of birth.
- If you are given a wristband during your visit, make sure the information on the wristband is correct.
- Learn all you can about your illnesses and conditions. Ask about treatment. Ask about tests, procedures or surgery, and agree on exactly what will be done.
- If you are having surgery, or an invasive procedure, ask that the correct site be marked while you are awake.

Make sure you know:

- The name of the procedure or surgery
- What the procedure or surgery is for
- How to prepare for the procedure or surgery
- How soon you will get results
- How accurate are the results
- Any risks or side effects
- If you are an inpatient, question all medicine(s) you are about to receive. The nurse should scan your wristband before giving you any medicine(s).



You are an important member of the health care team and should have input in your treatment plan.

- To do this, you must get the information you need to help you make the best possible decisions about your health care.
- Talk with your health care provider or other members of the health care team if you have questions or concerns. You may also speak with a Patient Advocate or write a note to the Director.
- Read about your condition and visit the internet site developed especially for Veterans. The web address is: <http://www.myhealth.va.gov>

HELP US TAKE CARE OF YOU:

- All VA employees should wear identification badges. Look for them. People taking care of you should also introduce themselves.
- Everyone taking care of you should wash their hands before touching you. Your visitors should also wash their hands. Clean hands help keep you safe.
- If you are an inpatient, make sure the health care team member verifies your identity before you are given treatment or medicine. If this is not done, ask to have your identity verified.

DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS:

- Before going home from a clinic visit or hospital stay, make sure you understand your discharge instructions. These instructions should be written in words you understand. Be sure you can read the writing. Make sure you understand the instructions by repeating them to the health care provider.
- Your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist will review your medicines with you.

You will be informed about:

- The name(s) of the medicine(s) you should take at home.
- The type of medicine(s) you are taking (for example, tablet, liquid, ointment, etc.).
- The amount (dose) of the medicine(s) you should take.
- How often you should take the medicine(s).
- How long you should take the medicine(s).
- The reason(s) for taking the medicine(s).
- Any side effects that would require you to seek medical attention.
- Any special instructions for preparing, using or storing the medicine(s).
- The name and telephone number of someone you can call if you have questions or concerns.
- Ask if you are to continue any of the medicine(s) you were taking before this visit or admission.
- Make sure you receive a list of all the medicine(s) you should take at home. Ask for written information about each medicine.
- Make sure the medicine(s) you receive from the pharmacy match the medicine(s) on your list and/or prescription(s). If the names are different or if something does not seem right, contact your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.
- Your health care provider will enter an electronic order for your medicine(s). Go to the outpatient pharmacy and tell them you have come to pick up your medicine(s). Your name will appear on the pharmacy marquee when your medicine is ready for pick-up. If you do not go the outpatient pharmacy, your medicine(s) will be mailed to you.
- Get the name and telephone number of someone you can call if you have questions or concerns.

References: Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations' "Speak-up" Facts about Patient Safety; National Patient Safety Foundation.

