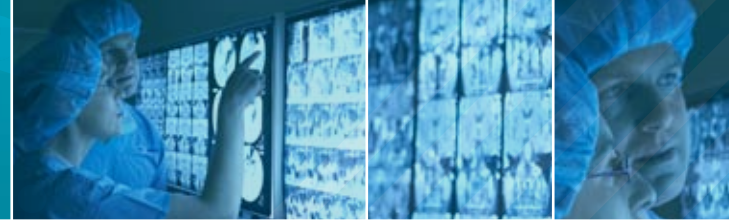


# SPEAK UP FOR BETTER SAFER HEALTH CARE

## Safer Surgery



Errors can happen before, during or after surgery. However there are ways of reducing this risk. A patient can take the wrong medicine, or not understand instructions about taking care of themselves. As a patient, you can make your hospital stay safer by being active, involved and informed.

### What's in this brochure?

This brochure contains information and guidance to help you be more actively involved in your own healthcare.

### Preparing for your surgery

Ask your specialist or doctor:

- > Are there any prescription or over-the-counter medicines, vitamins or natural medicines that I should not take before my surgery? For what period before?
- > Can I eat or drink before my surgery?
- > Are there any specific instructions or preparations I need to follow before my surgery? If so, are written instructions available? If I have any questions, who can I contact?

If you have any other questions, write them down. Take your list of questions when you see your doctor.

Ask someone you trust to:

- > Take you to and from the surgery facility.
- > Be with you at the specialist's, doctor's and hospital. This person can act as your advocate and can speak up for you when you cannot speak up for yourself.

Before you leave home:

- > Shower, wash your hair, and remove any nail polish on your fingers and toes. Do not wear make-up. Your hospital caregivers need to see your skin and nails to check your blood circulation.
- > Leave your jewellery, money and other valuables at home.

### At the surgery facility or hospital

The staff should ask you to sign an Informed Consent form. Read it carefully. It lists:

- > Your full name
- > The kind of operation or procedure you will have
- > The operation or procedure site
- > The reason for the operation or procedure
- > The risks of your operation or procedure
- > That you talked to your doctor about the surgery and asked questions
- > Your agreement to have the surgery.

Make sure everything on the form is correct. Do not sign the consent form until all information is complete and correct. If you have already signed the form, ask to see it again to confirm that it is correct.

Make sure all of your questions have been answered. If you do not understand something on the form, ask for more information.

For your safety, the staff may ask you the same question many times, such as:

- > Who you are (i.e. your full name)
- > Your date of birth
- > What kind of surgery you are having
- > The part of your body to be operated on
- > The reason for the procedure/operation

This information will be cross-checked against the information on your identification band, medical record and consent form.

Before your surgery

- > A healthcare worker will mark the spot on your body to be operated on. Make sure they mark only the correct part and nowhere else.
- > Marking usually happens when you are awake. Sometimes you cannot be awake for the marking. If this happens, a family member or friend or another healthcare worker can watch the marking. They can make sure that your correct body part is marked.
- > If the mark is in the incorrect place or wears or washes off, inform staff immediately.
- > Ask your surgeon if they will take a "time out" just before your surgery. This is done to make sure they are doing the right surgery on the right body part on the right person.

After your surgery

- > Tell your doctor or nurse about any pain.
- > Ask questions about medicines that are given to you, especially new medicines. What is it? What is it for? Are there any side effects? Tell your caregivers about any allergies you have to medicines. If you have more questions about a medicine, talk to your doctor or nurse before taking it.
- > Find about any IV (intravenous) fluids that you are given. Tell the nurse if you experience any pain around the IV site.
- > Ask your doctor if you will need therapy or medicines after you leave the hospital.
- > Ask when you can resume activities like work, exercise and travel.