



# Speak up for Safety:

## A guide for patients and families.

You as our patient, play a vital role in making your health care safe by being an active, involved, and informed member of your health care team by following these steps:

### 1. You are the center of your health care team. Speak up if you have doubts or concerns.

- Choose a doctor with whom you feel at ease
- Write down your questions and concerns and bring the list with you.
- Take a relative or friend with you to help you understand the information you are given.
- Expect your doctor or nurse to check your identity before giving any medicine or treatment.
- Ask your health care provider for information to complete an “Advance Directive” so your wishes for care are known.

### 2. Keep a list of ALL the medicines you take. Bring it with you when you seek health care.

- A list should include all non-prescription medicines, supplements or home or herbal remedies.
- Tell your health care providers about any drug allergies you have, about your medical conditions and hospitalizations.
- Ask about possible side effects and what to avoid while taking your medicines.
- Read the label when you get a medicine, including all warnings.
- Check to be sure your medicine is what the doctor ordered and that you know how to take or use it.

### 3. Talk with us about your health needs.

- Learn about your diagnosis, test and treatment plan.
- Be sure you understand the purpose of medical equipment used for your care.
- Write down any instructions you are given about follow-up care for after you leave the hospital. Ask questions to be sure you have heard and understand the information correctly.
- Let us know if you need any special help.

### 4. Be sure you understand what to expect if you need surgery or a test.

- Before surgery, expect your doctor to mark the surgical site with you.
- Be sure you and your health care team agree on exactly what will be done and by whom – *this is called Informed Consent*.
- Ask: Who will manage and take part in my care?  
Exactly what will you be doing and why?  
What are the benefits and risks?  
How should I and my family get ready?  
What will happen next and during recovery?
- Tell the surgeon, anesthesiologist, and nurses about any allergies, bad reaction to anesthesia or contrast dye, and any medications you take.

**5. Get the results of any test or procedure.**

- Ask when and how you will get the results of tests or procedures.
- If you do not get results as expected (in person, by phone or mail), call you doctor's office to ask for them. Do not assume the results are fine.
- Ask what the results mean for your future care.

**6. Help us prevent infections in the hospital.**

- Wash your hands carefully especially after using the bathroom.
- Do not be afraid to remind doctors and nurses about cleaning their hands before caring for you.
- If you have any type of tube or IV line, let your nurse know if it is loose or wet.
- Ask your friends or family not to visit if they are ill.
- Discourage visits from very young children.

The most important things you can do to be sure you get high-quality health care are to find and use health information and take an active role in making decisions about your care.

If you have any questions or concerns about your care or our services, talk with your Health Care Team. Our Patient Representatives are also available as impartial advocates for patients and families with any issues. You can reach them by calling 434-924-8315. You have the right to call the Virginia Department of Health at 800-955-1819 or the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations at 800-994-6610 if you have concerns.

For more information about any health or safety topic please call the UVa Health Resource Center at 434-924-5000 or visit the website: [www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/bodytalk](http://www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/bodytalk)

**Handouts** available to help you be involved with your care include:

- Advance Directives – “Your Right to Decide”
- Fall Prevention in the Hospital
- Handwashing Hints
- Home Safety Checklist
- Medication Safety & Medication List
- Preventing Infections

Use this space to write down your questions, concerns, and comments for your healthcare team. You may also want to write down the names of the doctors, nurses and other staff providing care: