

## Patient Safety in the Health Care Setting

Nationwide Children's Hospital is committed to giving quality health care to your child and keeping them safe while here. The health care team will work closely with you to do this. Parents or legal guardians play a vital role in the effort by being actively involved and informed. As a member of your child's health care team, what can you do?

### Identification (ID)

- Expect all health care workers to introduce themselves and wear ID badges. If you do not see one of our staff wearing an ID badge, ask to see it.
- If you are unsure whether a person should be taking care of your child, do not be afraid to ask who they are and what their role is in caring for your child.
- When your child is admitted, you will get 2 forms of ID. No one else can get these.
  - a **parent (or legal guardian) badge** with your photo on it. Wear it at all times. This parent badge will tell staff that you have 24-hour visiting rights.
  - a **parent (or legal guardian) wristband**. The band will let the staff know that you have the right to take your child home upon discharge.
- At registration, for added security, you will also need to choose 2 codes for others to use.
  - a **guest code**. The guest code will be one word or number that you can remember but others cannot guess. Write it down and keep it in a safe place.
    - The code will be saved with your child's information by our information and registration staffs. If you forget it, only they can tell it to you again or change it.
    - Family and friends will need to know the correct name of your child and the guest code in order to get a photo badge and to visit your child.
  - a **care code** (Picture 1). Callers from outside the hospital, who wish to know details about your child's



**Picture 1** Your **care code** is the last 4 digits on the patient and parent ID band.

condition, must use the care code that you select. Your care code is printed on your and your child's wristband.

- Help your child stay safe so others know they are a patient here.
  - Tell your child to always keep their ID band on.
  - Explain to them that every patient under the age of 18 must wear hospital-issued pajamas or gowns at all times.

## Be an active partner in your child's treatment

- Learn about their diagnosis, medical tests and treatment plan.
- You and your child's doctor should agree on each step of their care. Know:
  - who will treat them.
  - how long the treatment will last.
  - when there are changes to the treatment plan and why.
  - what you will need to learn so that you can care for your child at home.



**Picture 2** Be an active partner in your child's care. Speak up and ask questions. Take a relative or friend with you to help.

- Speak up if you have questions or concerns. Take a relative or a friend with you when you meet with the doctor or nurse. This may help you think of questions and understand the answers (Picture 2).
- Write down important things your doctor or nurse tells you.
- Make sure you get the results of all tests and procedures. Ask your child's doctor when the test results will be available and what they mean. Do not assume that the results are okay if you do not receive them when you expected.
- Ask if there is written information about your child's condition that you can take home to read. You might also ask about the best places to go to for more information.
- Keep copies of your child's medical records if they were treated somewhere else. Share the records with the health care team.
- Read all medical forms completely. Make sure you understand the forms before you sign them. Ask your child's doctor or nurse to explain anything you do not understand.

## Medicine safety

- Never give your child medicines from home while they are in the hospital. The hospital nursing staff will give your child all medicines needed.

- Keep a list or take a photo of all medicines your child takes, including vitamins, herbs, home remedies and over-the-counter drugs.
- Tell your child's doctors and nurses about any allergies or unusual reactions they have had to medicines in the past.
- Ask about the purpose, the brand and the generic names and side effects of the medicines prescribed (Picture 3). Ask for written information about each medicine.
- If your child is taking many medicines, ask if it is safe to take them together.
- Most prescriptions are sent to the pharmacist electronically. If your child's prescriptions are handwritten, make sure you can read the handwriting. If you cannot read them, the pharmacist may not be able to either.



**Picture 3** Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you have questions about your child's medicines.

## Prevent the spread of infection (germs)

- Make sure that anyone who comes close to your child washes their hands with soap and water or a waterless-based hand rub. Wash hands often and every time anyone enters or leaves the hospital room. Hand washing is the best way to protect your child and others from spreading germs (bacteria and viruses).
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. Wash your hands afterwards.
- When you are not feeling well, wear a mask to keep germs from spreading to others.
- Expect that any visitor, including siblings, with a cold or infectious illness may not be allowed to visit.

## Preventing falls

Children in the hospital are at greater risk for falling. Here is why:

- The child is getting used to a strange new bed and different surroundings.
- They may be connected to equipment such as an IV pump.
- Some medicines may make them weak or drowsy.
- The child's age or stage of development creates the risk. Toddlers may still be learning to walk, while teenagers may not want to ask for help.

A nurse will assess your child's risk for falls. If they are at high risk, the staff will put an alert sign in their room, outside their door and on the wheelchair when they go somewhere (Picture 4). An alert sign will also be put on the staff work board to tell others on the unit to take extra steps to prevent falls.

Here are some Dos and Don'ts you can follow to keep your child safe:



**Picture 4** A precautionary sign like these will be used to let others know of your child's risk of falling.

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep side rails up on the bed. If the side rails need to be down, keep one hand on your child and do not turn your back.</li> <li>• Keep things within easy reach, like water, tissues, remote controls (light cord, call button, TV) books, or toys.</li> <li>• Make sure your child wears non-skid slippers that fit. Pants, robes and straps should not be too long or dangle.</li> <li>• Keep floors clean, dry and clear. Tell staff members right away, if anything spills on the floor.</li> <li>• Keep your child's bed as low to the ground as possible. Both feet should touch the ground before standing.</li> <li>• Ask for help getting your child up to walk, move to a bedside commode or transfer to and from a wheelchair. Use a gait belt, if ordered.</li> <li>• Keep safety belts fastened when your child is in a wheelchair, high chair, infant carrier or swing.</li> <li>• Let the nurse know when you are leaving the room so your child can be checked more often.</li> <li>• Tell the nurse if you see changes in your child's physical or mental status.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not leave trash or clutter in the room that could cause slips, trips or falls.</li> <li>• Do not let your child walk around after taking medicine that may make them drowsy.</li> <li>• Do not let your child walk with medical equipment, like IV poles, or move them without help.</li> <li>• Do not let your child play with the bed controls or misuse other hospital equipment.</li> <li>• Do not let your child stand up in a wagon, stroller or anything with wheels or stand up on an exam table.</li> <li>• Do not let your child play on a stool or chair that has wheels.</li> <li>• Do not let your child run in the hospital or jump on furniture</li> <li>• Do not leave your child alone sitting or sleeping on a couch or chair. Do not leave your child alone in a play area.</li> <li>• Do not leave your child in an infant carrier alone on an exam table, countertop, couch or other high surface.</li> <li>• Do not stay silent if you see an unsafe situation.</li> </ul>

Adapted from *Speak Up: Help Prevent Errors in Your Care*, ©July 2019, Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations

Please let us know if you notice anything about your child's care that you feel is unsafe.