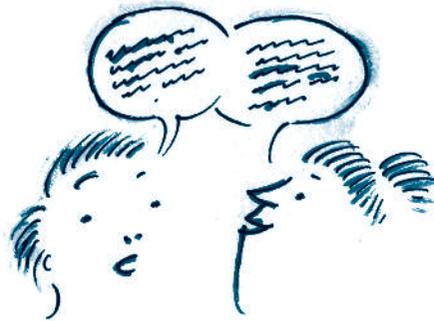


# Help prevent errors! Your safety in hospital



**patientensicherheit** schweiz  
**sécurité des patients** suisse  
**sicurezza dei pazienti** svizzera  
**patient safety** switzerland

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- Bei Sprachproblemen fragen Sie nach einem Dolmetscher.
- Dille ilgili bir sorununuz olursa lütfen bir tercüman isteyiniz.
- Ask for an interpreter if you need one.
- Ako imate jezičnih poteškoća, obratite se prevoditelju.
- Në qoftë se keni problem me gjuhën, pyesni për ndonjë përkthyes.
- U slučaju da ne razumete jezik, potražite prevodioca.
- Heger problêm û astengiyên weyên ziman hebin, wergerênerekî (Tercûmanekî) bixwazin.
- Caso tenha problemas linguísticos, solicite o apoio de um intérprete.
- Si tiene problemas con el idioma, consulte a un intérprete.
- В случае затруднений с языком запросите содействия переводчика.
- En cas da problemslinguisticsdumandai p.pl. suenterin interpret.
- பாசைப்பிரச்சனை இருப்பின் மொழிபெயர்ப்பாளர் தேவைஎன கேட்கவும்.

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## Help prevent errors! Your safety in hospital



- As patients, parents and relatives, you can help make sure that your stay in hospital goes smoothly.

We – that is you and us – share a common goal: we want your stay in hospital to be a pleasant one. To this end, we will do everything we can to help ensure that no errors occur during your treatment. However,

in hospitals – just as in any other work environment – errors can happen.

As a patient, parent or relative, you can help prevent such errors by

- asking questions
- telling us whenever you observe anything that raises your doubts.

This way, you are contributing to your own patient safety. In addition, you are giving general support by making the hospital aware of its errors so that lessons can be learned and similar errors avoided in the future.

The following pages contain important recommendations. You will find tips about what to look out for and which questions to ask. Even if some of the recommendations may not apply to you, we kindly ask you to study the information very carefully. If anything is unclear, please ask the nurses or doctors.

**Very important:** At times, you may feel uncomfortable about asking a question or saying something. We are aware that, sometimes, this takes courage. But it is worth it. **Don't let fear prevent you from speaking up or asking questions!**

**Be firm but friendly.** The aim is cooperation, not confrontation.

**Request an interpreter if there are language barriers.**

We are very glad if you choose to follow these recommendations. But this is optional. The hospital is responsible for your safety at all times. If, for health or other reasons, you do not follow certain recommendations, this will not result in any disadvantages for you.

### Example 1

Mrs Jones is in hospital with heart disease. The hospital doctor has prescribed her new medications. She has been taking the tablets for a few days now. She knows what they look like and how many she needs to take. One morning, the night-shift nurse brings her the tablets which need to be taken before breakfast. Mrs Jones looks at the tablets. She notices there is one more than usual and mentions this to the nurse. The nurse checks the tablets and confirms that there is indeed one tablet too many. She is glad Mrs Jones pointed it out. Thanks to her attentiveness, Mrs Jones was able to prevent an error.

## Example 2

Mr Smith and Mr Gibbson are in the same hospital ward after surgery. They both have a surgical wound covered with a dressing. During his rounds, the doctor opens Mr Smith's dressing and checks the surgical wound. Then, he wants to look at Mr Gibbson's wound. The doctor is rather busy and forgets to disinfect his hands in between treating the two patients. Mr Gibbson asks the doctor if he shouldn't disinfect his hands in between redressing the wounds of two patients. The doctor thanks him for pointing this out. He corrects his error by disinfecting his hands before checking Mr Gibbson's surgical wound. By double-checking, Mr Gibbson averted the risk of germs being transferred to his surgical wound via the doctor's hands.

## Relatives and friends



- Your relatives and friends can also contribute to your safety by adhering to the advice given.

Your relatives can be observant and ask questions on your behalf. Two pairs of eyes see more than one. Two pairs of ears hear more than one. If you think it is helpful, ask a relative or a friend to accompany you.

# Children, unconscious patients, and patients with limited decision-making capacity

The tips and recommendations in this brochure also apply in particular to

- parents of children
- relatives of adult patients with limited decision-making capacity, e.g. patients with dementia, patients who are unconscious or patients with a mental disability.

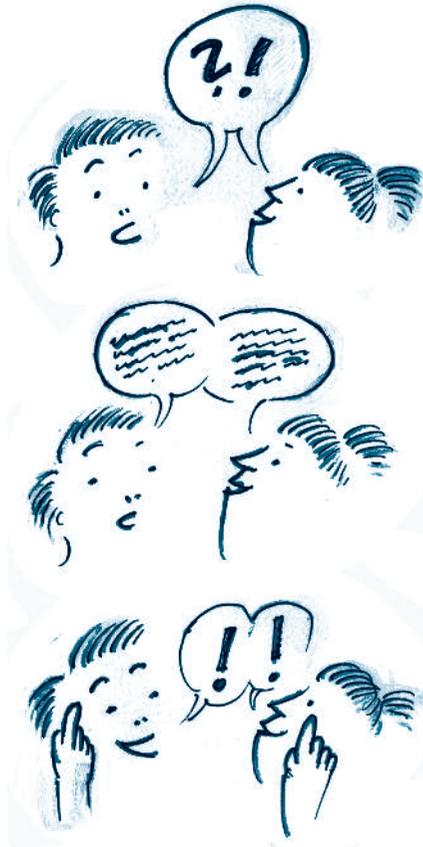
As parents, you know your child best. As a relative, you know the patient better than the doctors and nurses do. This is why your impressions are important and valuable to our staff!

As parents, you have the right to be with your child. This also applies during medical examinations, treatments and nursing care. If your presence is not desired or possible, please ask why.



- The same applies to relatives of adult patients with limited decision-making capacity.

## Inform and be informed



- The more you learn from us and we learn from you, the safer your stay in hospital will be.

When you are admitted to hospital, please ask which doctors and nurses will be responsible for you

Inform doctors and nurses about your diseases and medications. Don't forget to mention your allergies. For example, allergies to

- medications
- food
- materials used in hospitals, such as disinfectants, plasters, contrast agents, etc.
- other allergies

At each examination and treatment as well as for each new medication, it should be clear to you

- **why** you need it,
- **what the consequences and effects** are,
- **how** the medical examinations or treatments will be carried out,
- **who** will carry them out.

Make a point of asking if any of the above is unclear to you! When talking to nurses or doctors, it can be useful to repeat the information in your own words. Give it a go!

**If you are unsure** about whether everything is happening as it should, please double-check. Ask until you are sure you have understood.

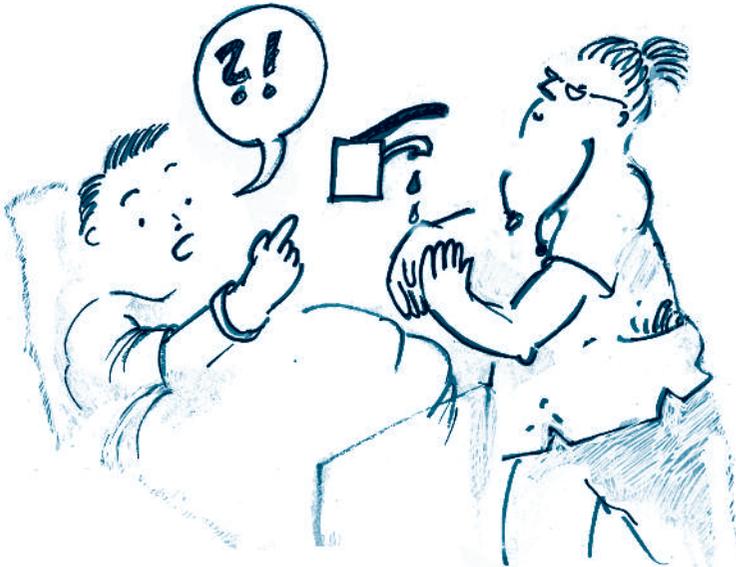
**If you are given conflicting information**, please always ask for clarification!

**If you have questions, please ask them as soon as possible.** Don't wait until the next day! Don't be afraid to refer to a problem or ask questions several times. This may be necessary because staff change when shifts change. You can also write down your questions in the cover of this brochure.

**If you have any new symptoms**, please inform the nurse or doctor immediately. Let us know at once if, for example, you are in pain or have difficulty breathing.

**If as a parent or relative you notice** that the state of health of your child or relative is deteriorating, please notify a nurse or doctor at once. Please keep asking until the explanations given are clear and satisfactory.

## Hand disinfection



### ■ Help prevent infections.

Infections are common in hospitals. To prevent infections, it is important that no germs (bacteria, viruses) are transferred between patients. The best method is to disinfect your hands (by rubbing an alcohol-based solution into your hands)!

Before treating a patient in any way and before any physical contact, nurses, doctors and other therapists should disinfect their hands. However, this sometimes gets forgotten.

Even if members of staff wear gloves, they should disinfect their hands before putting their gloves on.

You can also make sure that members of staff disinfect their hands. This is a great help.

If staff members do not rub an alcohol-based solution into their hands in your presence,

- please always ask them if they have disinfected their hands before you receive any form of treatment.
- Do not be afraid to ask this question to doctors as well!

**How can you ask?** For instance, you can say: «I really appreciate it that everyone disinfects their hands. This is why I'm double-checking with you that you have disinfected your hands.» Or you can say: «I'm worried about infections and appreciate people always disinfecting their hands. Have you disinfected yours?»

Please make sure you and your relatives wash your hands regularly during your stay in hospital. Washing your hands after going to the toilet is an absolute must!

# Medications



- Everything has to be right where your medications are concerned.

Inform the doctor or a nurse about all the medications you are currently taking. The best is to bring a list with you. Also mention so-called «gentle» medicines such as herbs, plant-based or homeopathic preparations, Chinese medicine, vitamins, minerals (trace elements), food supplements and anti-ageing products. Make sure you don't forget medications you only take occasionally (e.g. headache tablets). Also mention any medications you have an adverse reaction to.

Inform the doctor or nurse about all your allergies. For example, allergies to

- medications
- food

- materials used in hospitals, such as disinfectants, plasters, contrast agents, etc.
- any other allergies

The lists at the end of this brochure are here for you to write down all these things.

#### Before taking a new medication, always ask

- what it is for
- what you need to know about its use and side effects
- whether the medications you are taking are compatible with each other.

If you notice an unusual reaction after taking a medication, please inform a nurse or a doctor immediately.

Look at each medication. Make sure it is the right medication.

#### Don't hesitate to say if you think that you

- are being given the wrong medication
- are being given the wrong dose
- are being given the medication at the wrong time
- are being given too many medications

Don't take the medication until your doubts have been cleared.

Ask the nurses or doctor for a list of the medications you are given in hospital.

**Never take anyone else's medications.** Never give your medications to anyone else! What is good for you can cause serious harm to somebody else.

Only ever leave your medications on your own bedside table and nowhere else in the room. This will help prevent medications from accidentally being taken by the wrong person.

## Interventions and surgery



- Your attentiveness is helpful before and after interventions and surgery.

Ask your doctor about the planned surgery until you have understood everything. During this talk you can repeat what you have understood in your own words. This will allow you to verify if you have understood everything correctly. Pictures or sketches of the planned surgery can help you get a better understanding. Request these visual aids!

Ask the doctor for a copy of the consent form for your planned surgery.

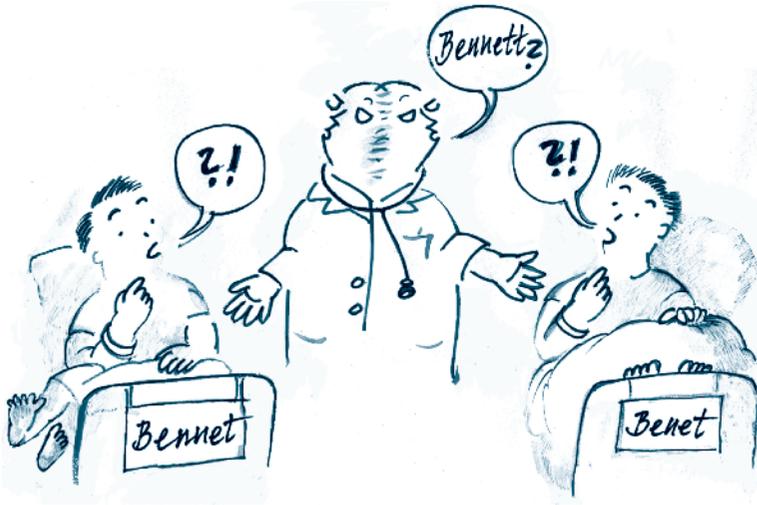
If the spot on your body to be operated on is marked with a marker pen beforehand, help ensure that the correct spot is marked. Speak up at

once if you have doubts as to whether it is the right spot. If the spot on your body to be operated on is not marked, ask why not.

**Help protect the surgical wound.** The dressing may only be changed by doctors or nurses who have disinfected their hands. Inform the doctor or nurses immediately if you have any pain, throbbing, redness, weeping, if the dressing is peeling off, or if you experience any other problems with the surgical wound.

Only nurses or doctors may check the surgical wound and change the dressing!

## Preventing confusion



### ■ Doing the right thing on the right patient.

There are many people in a hospital, and some of them are only there for a short time. In modern medicine, complicated and diverse tasks are often performed at the same time. This means that, despite all diligence, sometimes things, information or people can be confused. We do everything we can to prevent this from happening. However, you can do your bit to help ensure that no such confusion arises.

Make sure that doctors, nurses and therapists always check that you are the right patient. You will, for instance, be asked for your surname, first name and date of birth. This is important before every medical examination and treatment. You may be asked to confirm your identity several times. Please help every time! Give your correct **first name and surname** so that you are never confused with anyone else.

If you are addressed unclearly or by the wrong name, please correct the confusion immediately and say who you are.

If something is being done to you and you are not sure whether it really is meant to be done to you, please double-check.

If you receive a blood transfusion, check that your first name, surname and date of birth are correctly labelled on the blood product (bag). Carry out this check together with the nurse or the doctor.

**Delivery suites and neonatal/paediatric wards:** If you are expressing breast milk, please ensure that the milk containers and bottles for your baby are labelled with the correct first name and surname.

# Discharge



- So that everything continues to go well after your stay in hospital.

You should be aware of the following when you are discharged from hospital:

- who is responsible for your further treatment
- who will be given your discharge report
- what you need to pay attention to
- which medications you need to continue to take in which manner
- which new medications you need to continue taking
- which medications taken previously have been replaced by other medications
- what you need to take into account for your convalescence
- whom you need to contact in the case of which symptoms

- **where** you are being discharged to
- **how** you are going to get there
- **how** and **by whom** you will be cared for there

Ask for a **copy of your discharge report or short report**. This report contains your diagnoses, prescriptions and medications.

If you need to continue taking medications, ask for a **medication plan**. This should include which medications you need to take when, how, for how long and in which dose.

Ask if you will be given the **medications required for the next few days and a prescription**.

Ask when your next check-up will be and, if needed, for a doctor's certificate if you are unable to work.

## What to do if an error nonetheless occurs?



If you experience or observe a potential error, inform the doctor or nurses **immediately**. You can also contact somebody else. Some hospitals have a patient representation office, an ombudsman or a complaints office. There are also external contact points. Ask a nurse or a hospital office about whom to contact.

If a potential error occurred during your treatment, ask the doctor what exactly happened. Ask about the consequences of the error on your health and what is being done to avoid further damage.

You can also  
always contact:

**spo – Patientenschutz**  
Häringstrasse 20  
8001 Zurich  
Telephone +41 (0)44 252 54 22  
[www.spo.ch](http://www.spo.ch)

**Dachverband Schweizerischer Patientenstellen**  
Hofwiesenstrasse 3 / Postgebäude Schaffhauserplatz  
8042 Zurich  
Telephone +41 (0)44 361 92 56  
[www.patientenstelle.ch](http://www.patientenstelle.ch)



# My medications

- Write down all medications you are currently taking, here. Remember to include «gentle» medicines, such as herbs, plant-based or homeopathic preparations, Chinese medicine, vitamins, minerals (trace elements), food supplements and anti-aging products. Don't forget medications you only take occasionally (e.g. headache tablets). Also write down any medications you have an adverse reaction to.

■ I am currently taking the following medications:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

■ I have an adverse reaction to the following medications:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_





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