



It's Your Health... Be Involved!





Take an active role in your health care

Patient safety is a high priority for New Brunswick's Regional Health Authorities, who work hard to ensure that every patient has a safe hospital stay and a positive outcome. However, there is some risk involved in all aspects of life, including coming into a hospital. For example, falls, medication errors, allergic reactions and infections can occur despite our best efforts.

Research shows that patients who **take a more active role in their care** tend to get better results. Here are some ways you can become involved and help make your hospital stay as safe as possible:

- Learn about your health conditions and treatments.
- Ask questions; speak up if you have concerns.
- Make sure your health care team knows:
 - Your health condition;
 - The medications you take;
 - Any allergies you have.
- When you are sick or stressed, it can be hard to understand everything that is said and to make decisions. If you are unable to participate fully in your care, you may want to ask a family member or friend to help.



Minimizing your risk of infection

Germs are present at home, at work and at the hospital. Although hospitals work very hard to protect you from infections, there are some things you can do to protect yourself during your stay.

- **Wash your hands often**, or use the antiseptic gel provided by the hospital.
- Ask your visitors to use the antiseptic gel when they arrive at the hospital and again when they leave.
- Ask family and friends not to visit you if they have colds, flu, fever, sore throat, diarrhea, or any infectious illnesses.
- Germs can be carried from patient to patient by caregivers. Don't hesitate to ask those providing your care to **wash their hands** and put on gloves before examining you.

Germs are present practically everywhere; wash your hands often!





Helping to avoid medication errors

It is important to keep a current list of your medications. Use one pharmacy so they will have a complete list of your medications. The pharmacy can print the list for you.

When going to hospital or a health care provider

- Take your medications with you, as well as the pharmacy-prepared list of medications.

In hospital

- Always show your wristband to the nurse and state your full name for correct identification when receiving medication.
- Know your medications. If you don't recognize the color or size of a medication, speak up! Find out what it is and why you're being asked to take it.
- Make sure your doctors and nurses know about any allergies or previous reactions to drugs.
- Do not take any other medicines without your health team's approval (including over-the-counter medicines like aspirin or cough medicine, vitamins, herbal products, etc.).
- Let your nurse know if your medications are overdue.

TIP

Make sure you understand what your doctor is prescribing, and double-check the prescription when you pick it up at the pharmacy to make sure it is what your doctor prescribed.



Helping to prevent falls

New Brunswick hospitals work hard to keep patients safe while in hospital by trying to prevent falls. You can do your part by doing the following:

- Wear rubber-soled footwear that fits properly. Laced-up shoes are best!
- Ask the nursing staff for assistance, especially at night. Do not feel you are a burden!
- Ask that a light be turned on, if you are moving about.
- Report any liquid or obstructions on the floor.
- Make sure wheelchair brakes are in place before sitting down.
- When in bed, ask to have bedside rails up, if it makes you feel more secure.
- Your bed should be at its lowest position when you are getting out. Your nurse or health team member can adjust the level of the bed for you.
- Make sure to have your call bell at your bedside.



Learn about your condition or treatments

The more you know about your condition and treatments – the more you know what to expect – the better.

You can learn about your illness or condition by:

- Asking your doctor or a member of your health care team;
- Using the library;
- Using trusted Internet sites;
- Making contact with support groups.

You and your doctor/health care team should agree on what will be done each step of the way.

If there is anything about your care that you don't understand, ask for an explanation.

The more you know about your condition and treatments, the better.





Discharge – What you need to know when going home

It is important that you understand what to expect while you recover at home. In addition to having all instructions verbally explained, you can ask for written instructions.

Those instructions may include:

- What your treatment plan is
- What home care services you may receive
- What medications you require
- What appointments you need to make
- What special equipment you may require

Ask questions if you are unclear about any instructions.

It is good to have a family member or a friend present at this time to help you.

It is important that you understand what to expect while you recover at home.

Ask questions if you are unclear about any instructions.





A well-informed patient is a safer patient!

Your health provider may think you understand more about your health care problem than you really do. **Do not be afraid or embarrassed to ask for information, no matter how basic.**

You should ask:

- What is my health problem?
- What do I need to do?
- Why do I need to do this?

For further patient safety tips, visit the Canadian Patient Safety Institute webpage at www.patientsafetyinstitute.ca/patients/overview.html.

For information on diseases and conditions, visit Health Canada at www.hc-sc.gc.ca/index_e.html, or the Canadian Medical Association's public resource page at www.cma.ca/Public/index.asp?lc=2.



This brochure has been made possible by the collaboration of the NBHA and the eight Regional Health Authorities. For more information, call your local hospital. To order copies of this brochure, call the New Brunswick Healthcare Association at 506-451-0750.