



This pamphlet is part of a range of *ThinkSAFE* patient safety resources available free to patients, families and carers at: [www.thinksafe.care](http://www.thinksafe.care)

You can also watch our video  
**'A guide to patient safety for patients and families'**  
at: [www.thinksafe.care](http://www.thinksafe.care)

If you have any queries or comments about *ThinkSAFE*  
please contact: [Thinksafe@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:Thinksafe@newcastle.ac.uk)

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## What you can do to enhance your safety in hospital

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## WHAT ELSE YOU & YOUR FAMILY CAN DO...

### At any time

#### Ask questions to better understand your health problem

Research suggests that asking 3 simple questions can help patients get the information they need about their illness and treatment.



Whether you are in hospital with a new or existing illness, or when you are visiting your GP, try asking:

1. "What do I need to do?"
2. "Why do I need to do this?"



Sometimes there may be choices to make about your healthcare. To help you choose try asking:

1. "What are my options?"
2. "What are the possible benefits and risks?"
3. "How can we make a decision together that is right for me?"

#### Ask a trusted friend or relative to help you

##### We know it can be hard for patients to ask questions



If you are uncomfortable about asking questions ask someone you trust to be with you when talking to a doctor or nurse.

They can remind you what to ask, ask questions for you, take notes or ask for answers to be repeated.

#### Write your questions down

##### This will remind you what you or your family want

You could just show your question list to your nurse or doctor if you find that easier. Use the question prompts provided in this Logbook to help you get the information you need about your care and treatment.



## WHAT YOU & YOUR FAMILY CAN DO ....

### Before you come into hospital

Make a list of all the medications that you take at home. Include medicines that you buy yourself, like cough syrups & vitamins. Remember to write down any allergies you have.



### When you are admitted

Take your list with you to hospital and show it to the member of staff admitting you.

Ask "Does my list match your records?"

Ask "What tablets might I be given in hospital?"

Ask "What side effects should I watch out for?"



### During your stay in hospital

Help prevent infection, find out about and follow hygiene recommendations for your ward.

Wash your hands regularly, especially before eating and after going to the toilet.

Remind your visitors to clean their hands each time they come on to & leave the ward. Ask your visitors not to sit on your bed.

Remind staff to wash their hands too. Protecting you from risk of infection is very important to us. If you think we have not cleaned our hands then please do remind us.

Ask "Before you do that, could you wash your hands please?"

It really is OK to say this. We will not be offended or upset.



## WHAT YOU & YOUR FAMILY CAN DO...

### During your stay in hospital

#### Ask about your care & treatment

**If you are not sure about something** that is said to you ask for the information again.



**Ask** "I didn't quite understand that, could you explain it to me again please?"

**Ask** "Could you check that for me please, my nurse/doctor has told me something different?"

**If you are having surgery**, ask your doctor to confirm the part of your body to be operated on?



**If something unexpected happens**, ask why. If you are given unfamiliar medications to take for e.g., or sent for a test or X-ray that you were not expecting.

**Ask** "These don't look like the pills I usually take' can you tell me what are they are for please?"

**Ask** "I wasn't expecting to have this test, can you tell me what it is for please?"



**If you do have any tests done**, ask for the results and what they mean.



#### Tell staff if you begin to feel unwell.

Sometimes it can be difficult for staff to notice important changes in a patient's condition.

**You know yourself better than anyone** – so please tell staff if you start to feel hot or unwell.



**Family members** should do the same if they think that the patient is unwell or "not quite themselves".

**Patients can look out for each other.** Encourage other patients who tell you they are in pain or that they are feeling unwell to tell staff how they feel.

## WHAT YOU & YOUR FAMILY CAN DO...

### Before you go home

#### Ask about what to expect after leaving hospital

**Find out** if there is anything that you should know about.



**Ask** "What happens next?"

Use the discharge checklist in this Logbook for suggestions of other questions you could ask.

**Ask** "Who should I contact for help or advice?"

Section 4 lists useful sources of information and advice for patients and their families.

#### Ask about medications you are given to take home

**Make sure you understand** each new medication that you are given.



**Ask** "What are they for" "How should I take them?"

**Ask** "Are there any side effects to watch out for?"

Ask for all changes to be explained to you and for help to update your own medication list.

**Make sure you are aware** of any changes that have been made to your usual medications.

**Ask** "Have any of my medicines been stopped?"

**Ask** "Have any of my medicines been changed?"

Ask for all changes to be explained to you and for help to record this on your own medication list.



### After your discharge

#### Tell your GP about your recent stay in hospital and about any changes made to your medications

Ask them and other staff involved in your care to help you keep your Logbook up to date. This will help you stay informed and involved.