

Be Involved in Your Health Care

We want to partner with you to get the best results from your health care experience.

We are committed to:

- Patient and family centered care.
- Your safety: preventing medical errors
- Working with you and your family to find the health information you need to make your best choices about health.

You are the key decision-maker for matters related to your health. You, your health care provider, and your family are all partners in your health care.

Here is how you and your family can participate in your safety and help reduce the risk of medical errors:

- Be involved in your care. Research shows that patients who are more involved tend to get better results.
- Ask family members and friends to help with your care.
- Know about your medicines and carry a list of all medicines including vitamins.
- Know your medical history and treatment plans.
- Help prevent the spread of infection.
- Report concerns about your care.

Talk with Your Health Care Providers

Talk with your doctor and your health care team about what will be done during each step of your care.

- **Share your health history** as completely as possible. Tell your health care provider about any other treatment you may be receiving elsewhere.
- **Learn more** about your diagnosis (such as what is the exact name of your diagnosis) and the medical tests and procedures you are undergoing (such as risks and complications).
- **Ask questions.** Write down your questions before you see your health care provider.

During a clinic visit or hospital stay, ask questions if you are concerned with or don't understand something.

- **Record answers.** You may be more nervous than you realize. Or, the information you receive may be new or a lot to take in all at once. Write down the answers to the questions you ask. You may want to do this during your visit, or soon after, while the answers are fresh in your mind. You may want to get a notebook or file and take it with you to your visit.
- **Gather information** on your condition or treatment from your health care team, and at one of these resource centers:
 - Health Information Resource Center in the 3rd floor lobby at UWMC.
 - Cancer Library on the 8th floor at UWMC.
 - Resource Center on the 1st floor at SCCA.
 - **Know and follow the treatment plan** that you and your health care team agreed upon. Ask questions if you are not sure of the plan.
 - **Expect open discussion** with the members of your health care team.

What Your Family and Friends Can Do

Involve a family member or friend in your care. Make sure your family member or friend understands the role you want them to take. Ask for help and support when you need it:

- Ask them to go with you to doctor visits.
- Ask them to take notes or ask questions that you may not think of.
- Ask them to help you gather information.

Staff may, using their professional judgment, share treatment information about you with your family and trusted friends. Be sure to tell your caregivers and clinic staff when you have a certain family member or friend who you would like to be involved in your care.

Help Prevent the Spread of Infection

These simple steps can help prevent you from getting an illness or infection while you are in the hospital or clinic.

- Ask everyone – health care providers and visitors – to wash their hands with soap and water or to use hand gel. Hand washing is the best way to fight the spread of infection.
- Ask about any infection control precautions that you need to tell your family members and friends about.
- A visitor who has an infection, even “just” a cold, could affect your recovery or treatment. Please ask anyone who might visit you, either in the hospital or at home, to wait to visit you until they are well.

Know About Your Medicines

Work with your pharmacist and health care team to understand the purpose, dosage, appearance, side effects, and drug interactions of each medicine prescribed for you. They can also suggest ways to help you keep track of how and when to take your medicines.

- Bring your bottles of medicines with you to your first visit and/or an updated list of your medicines.

- Keep a list of the medicines you take. **Include all prescription, herbal, dietary, and over-the-counter medicines.** Also include:
 - Your allergies and reactions to food, medicine, or other things.
 - Immunizations and vaccinations you've had.
 - Names and phone numbers of your doctor(s) and pharmacist(s).
- Bring your drug benefit card when you come to the hospital or clinic.
- Before you leave the hospital or clinic, be sure you know and understand these five things about your medicines:
 1. **Purpose** – Find out what the medicine is supposed to do. You may also want to ask your doctor or pharmacist about any new medicines and if there are any alternatives to the prescribed drug.
 2. **Dosage** – Ask exactly how to take your medicine: when to take it, how to take it (with water, with food, without food, etc.), and what to do if you miss a dose.
 3. **Appearance** – Know what your medicines look like. Speak up if the medicine you receive looks different from the one you usually take.
 4. **Side Effects** – Ask about any side effects that may occur while taking the medicine, and what to do if they occur.
 5. **Drug Interactions**–Help all your health care providers, including your dentist, screen for potential drug interactions. Give them a complete list of your chronic medical conditions and all medicines you are taking.

Your Medical Records

Your medical records have important information about your health history.

- If this is your first time at our hospital or clinic, ask your other health care providers to send your medical records to us. You can also bring in your own copies.
- We will ask you to sign a release of information so that we can share information about your treatment with your other providers.
- Bring the name(s) and address(es) of other health care providers so that we can send them information on the treatment you receive here.

Report Concerns

- If you have concerns about your medical care or wish to report a safety concern, contact the manager of the department where you received care.
- If you are not satisfied with the response or results you receive from that manager, contact a Patient Relations Representative:
 - For University of Washington Medical Center (UWMC), call 206-598-9636.
 - For Seattle Cancer Care Alliance (SCCA), call 206-288-1056.

Questions You May Want to Ask

Diagnosis

- What is the exact name of the diagnosis, disease, or condition? If this condition is known by other names, what are they?

- What can I expect to happen as a result of having this condition? How will it affect my everyday activities and work?
- Will this condition require a specialist or referral? If yes, who would you recommend?

Options for Treatments and/or Procedures

- What are my options for treatment?
- What are the risks or complications of these treatments and/or procedures?

Recommended Treatment and/or Procedure

- What treatment or procedure will I receive?
- What are the risks and complications of this treatment or procedure?
- How long does this treatment or procedure take?
- Will I need to ask a family member or friend to be a caregiver, to help with my care at the hospital or at home?
- Are there any activities that I should restrict or avoid after this treatment or procedure?
- What can I do to manage any pain after this treatment or procedure?

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC and SCCA clinic staff are also available to help at any time. For contact information please look in the Import Numbers section of this manual.