Safe and sound

Your inpatient safety guide

aetna®
At Aetna, we understand that you might have concerns about an upcoming hospital stay. But there are things you can do to help put your mind at ease.

This brochure is a good place to start. It offers proven ways to help you and your family reduce the risk of possible complications from your hospital care. You’ll find a detailed patient safety checklist with healthy steps to take before, during and after your hospital stay.

The more you know, the more you can help your hospital stay to be as safe — and successful — as possible.

Did you know?

- In 2016, researchers at Johns Hopkins Medicine estimated that medical errors are now the third leading cause of death in the United States. The Johns Hopkins study states that more than 250,000 Americans die each year from medical errors.¹
- Hospital-acquired infections are the most common complication of hospital care in the United States and result in extended hospital stays, higher costs and increased risk of patient death. The CDC reports that in about 1 in 25 hospitalized patients will have an infection that is caused by their medical care.²,³

We want you to be informed about how to work with your physicians, nurses and other hospital staff to help lower your risk and make your hospital stay as safe as possible.

Studies find that patients who are more involved with their hospital care tend to have better outcomes, stay safer and recover faster.

That’s why we are encouraging you and your spouse or partner to take the steps outlined in this brochure — steps that will make you more aware of the safety measures you can take before, during and after an inpatient hospitalization.

¹Martin A Makary, Michael Daniel. Medical error—the third leading cause of death in the US. BMJ, 2016; i2139 DOI: 10.1136/bmj.i2139
³CDC healthcare-associated (HAI) prevalence survey, cdc.gov/ha/isurveillance/, page last updated October 25, 2016
Patient safety checklist

The following information includes reminders, recommendations and appropriate actions you and your family members can take to make sure that you and your providers are taking all of the steps possible — before, during and after your hospital stay — to minimize the risk of complications. If a family member will be your caregiver, please share this list with that person as well.

Before your hospitalization

- Confirm with your doctor the reason for the hospitalization and/or procedure, and verify that there are not other less invasive, but equally effective, treatments for your condition.
- Discuss with your doctor what you should expect in terms of recovery, including how pain will be managed and how long you will remain in the hospital.
- Verify through Aetna that the hospital where you will be admitted has a good safety record and a positive and significant history of performing your procedure. If there is a hospital with a better safety record in your area, discuss with your doctor whether you can be admitted there instead.
- Prepare a list of all medications you are currently taking, and bring the list with you to the hospital. Be sure to include over-the-counter drugs and dietary supplements (such as vitamins) as well as prescriptions.
- Make sure your physician is aware of any drug or latex allergies you may have.
- Make sure your primary care physician or other care providers are aware of your upcoming hospitalization. Understand who to contact after your hospitalization if you have questions or issues when you’re home.
- Make sure your doctor or CareConnect nurse sets up any home care or medical equipment you may need following your discharge.

During your hospitalization

- Ask all health care staff whether they have washed their hands before they touch you. This small step can make a very important difference.
- Make sure that each health care staff member reads and confirms your name on your wristband before performing any procedures or giving you any medication.
- Confirm that each test or procedure has been requested by your physician or surgeon.
- Verify with your physician or surgeon the procedure he or she will be performing and which body part will be operated on (for example, replacing your left rather than your right knee). Ask your physician or surgeon how that will be verified once you are in the operating room.
- Ask your physician or surgeon how any pain medication might interact with other prescription medicine you may be taking while you are in the hospital and/or after you are discharged.
- Don’t be afraid to speak up and ask questions. If you or a family member believe that you have had a significant change in your medical condition, speak with a nurse right away. It’s your health and safety; you have the right to confirm that you are receiving proper care.

After you are discharged

- Know when or under what circumstances to contact your physician or surgeon with any signs of complication.
- Ask your physician or surgeon what treatment plan you should follow at home, including new medicines, scheduled follow-up appointments and when you can resume regular activities.
- Have a family member or friend attend follow-up appointments so they can hear the doctor’s instructions and also raise questions on your behalf.
- Confirm that you can resume the medicines you were taking prior to your hospitalization.
- Ensure that you have made your home safer for your recuperation, including removing slippery rugs, crating your pets or planning to live on one level if your living and sleeping areas are on different floors.
For more information

A CareConnect nurse is available to you at any time if you have questions about your upcoming hospitalization or procedure. Just call 1-877-512-0363 to discuss your condition and receive valuable safety tips from a CareConnect nurse.

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