



ST VINCENT'S
HOSPITAL
MELBOURNE

A FACILITY OF ST VINCENT'S HEALTH AUSTRALIA



Your safety

Inspired
by
You

YOUR SAFETY

STAYING SAFE IN HOSPITAL

Healthcare in Australia is among the best and safest in the world. Even so, there are risks to spending time in hospital. The risk of infection or developing a blood clot or pressure injury increases when you're unwell or have had surgery. In this booklet we look at some of the common risks and how we can work together to reduce them.

OUR ROLE

Your care and safety are our top priority. Our responsibility is to offer you high quality healthcare in a safe environment. We use the best medical evidence to plan and deliver your treatment. We also use a range of tools to assess and minimise the risks to your health.

YOUR ROLE

We encourage you to be actively involved in your own healthcare. Please ask questions or tell us how you're feeling, what you need and what you're concerned about – we want to hear from you. Patients who speak up often get well faster. You can use the next page of this booklet to write down any questions you may have or to remind yourself of key safety messages discussed with staff.

Staff will ask you many questions while you are in hospital. The way you answer these questions will guide staff in assessing the risks to your health and safety. It is very important that you provide accurate answers to these questions so that we can best meet your healthcare needs and keep you safe while in hospital.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is a small teal-colored tab or piece of tape visible at the top right corner. The paper appears to be part of a binder or folder.



IDENTIFICATION

Staff will check your identification regularly while you are in hospital. They will do this by asking you to state your name, date of birth and other details verbally. You will also be given an identification (ID) band when you're admitted to hospital. The band will be placed on your wrist and will be used as an additional method of checking your identification before any test, procedure or giving you medication. Staff asking you to state your name can often seem repetitive but this is important for your safety. Staff are interacting with many patients and it is important for your safety that you receive the treatment intended for you.

- ✓ Make sure the information on your ID band is correct.
- ✓ Make sure you're wearing your ID band at all times.
- ✓ All St Vincent's staff should be wearing an identification badge. If you can't see their badge or aren't sure who someone is, please ask.



IF YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR CONDITION

Our staff are trained to notice and respond to changes in your health, but we need to hear from you too. Families and carers/friends often know before hospital staff when a patient is becoming more unwell.

If you have any concerns you can ask for help.

Who can ask for help?

- ✓ Patients
- ✓ Families
- ✓ Carers/friends

When to ask for help?

If you are a patient:

If you feel you are becoming unwell.

If you are a family member or a carer/friend:

If the patient looks more unwell or you are worried about their behaviour.

Please tell us if you are worried about a recent change in your condition.

ADVANCE CARE PLANNING

Advance Care Planning is a process of planning for your future healthcare. You can write down your values, beliefs and preferences. This can guide doctors to make clinical decisions about your care if you become too sick to communicate your preferences and wishes.

If you have an Advance Care Plan, let your doctor or nurse know. It's important for us to know what your wishes are.

If there are any treatments that you don't wish to have, please let us know.

If you would like to chat more about Advance Care Planning let your doctor or nurse know.



HANDOVER

During your stay you may receive care from doctors, nurses, pharmacists and allied health staff.

Allied Health staff include physiotherapists, occupational therapists, dieticians, speech pathologists and podiatrists.

Throughout your stay staff will change shifts. Clinical handover is the process whereby staff are kept up to date about your condition and treatment. During the day handover will occur in your room. You are an important part of the handover process and we encourage you to ask questions.



MEDICATION

Medication is an important part of your treatment. When you're admitted to hospital, you'll be asked about the medicines you take. Over-the-counter medication, vitamins and natural therapies are just as important to mention as prescription medicine. Please tell us what you take and what works for you – your experience is important.

Tell us if you are using:

- tablets from a pharmacist or supermarket
 - liquid medicine like cough syrup
 - natural therapies like herbs and tinctures
 - vitamins or supplements
 - medicated creams or ointments
 - puffers or inhalers
 - eye drops
 - patches
 - recreational drugs
 - injected medicines like insulin etc.
 - or any other medications
- ✓ Bring all of your medicines to hospital with you. These will be stored securely during your stay.
 - ✓ Bring an up-to-date list of your medicines and show it to our staff when you're admitted. This will ensure our staff know what medicines you are currently taking.

- ✓ Tell us if you've had allergies or bad reactions to medicines in the past.
- ✓ Only take medication provided to you by St. Vincent's staff. Please do not take any of your own medications, including any medications brought in by your family or friends, as they may interact with new medicines given to you while you are in hospital.
- ✓ While you're in hospital don't be afraid to ask what medicines you're receiving and why. We're here to help.
- ✓ Ask for a new list of medicines before you go home. This list will be helpful for your local doctor and pharmacist.



FALLS

You have an increased risk of falling in hospital because you're in an unfamiliar environment, feeling unwell and may not be as strong as normal. Falls can cause minor injuries and make you scared of falling again and slow your recovery. Sometimes, a fall may cause a more serious injury, like a broken bone. It's important that all staff, patients and carers work together to stop falls.

- ✓ Nurses will ask you if you have ever had a fall. Please tell staff: how many falls; what time of day/night they happened; and what you were doing at the time. This will help us identify the possible causes of your falls. It helps us make a plan to decrease the chance of you falling during your stay.
- ✓ Every bed has a call bell – make sure you can reach yours easily. Use the call bell to ask for help to walk to the toilet or when you are unable to reach your belongings, or whenever you need to. Call for assistance as soon as you can, when the ward is busy you may need to wait a few minutes for a nurse.
- ✓ Have your bed at knee height and ensure your feet are flat on the floor before getting out of bed. Sit on the edge of the bed for a minute before standing up. This will let any dizziness pass. **Never climb over the bed rails.**
- ✓ Bring to hospital your supportive, flat, non-slip shoes. Lace up shoes are best. Wear them while walking. Put your shoes on when sitting, and before taking the first step. Do not walk in only socks or stockings as these can make you slip.

- ✓ If you use a walking frame or stick, wear dentures, glasses or hearing aids at home, bring them to hospital and keep them within reach.
- ✓ Ask staff to show you where the lights are and how to turn them on. Turn the light on so you can see clearly. Let us know if you would like a night light.
- ✓ Make sure you know where the toilet is.
- ✓ Walk as often as your nurse/ physiotherapist recommends. Check with staff if family/ friends can walk with you at other times.
- ✓ Listen to the advice of our staff – it takes time to recover from an illness and you may need more help with walking than you think.
- ✓ Items you don't need should be taken home or stored in a cupboard to reduce clutter and keep them safe.



What family or visitors can do if a patient is confused:

- ✓ Stay and sit with the patient quietly.
- ✓ Staff may assess that it is safer for the patient to be in a bed positioned at floor level. This is to limit the risk of injury to the patient if they were to fall from bed.
- ✓ Call for a staff member if you need help with the patient.
- ✓ Don't leave the patient alone in the bathroom.

- ✓ Ensure all items the patient will need are within their reach before you leave.
- ✓ Tell a staff member when you are leaving.
- ✓ Put chairs, extra bags and clutter away.
- ✓ **Do not put bed rails up**



PRESSURE INJURIES

A pressure injury, also known as a bedsore or ulcer, can form when you spend a long time sitting or lying in the same position. The risk of a pressure injury increases if you have to stay in bed or a chair, if you have continence issues, if you have limited sensation or circulation, or if you're not eating well.

A pressure injury can look like a reddened or blistered area on the skin. Bony parts of the body like the heels, tailbone or toes are most at risk.

- ✓ Keep moving, as much as it's safe to do so.
- ✓ Change the position you're sitting or lying in as often as possible.
- ✓ Look after your skin and tell our staff if you notice changes to the colour of your skin or how it feels.
- ✓ Eat a balanced, healthy diet.
- ✓ We prepare a pressure injury and management plan for every patient admitted overnight or longer – ask your nurse to explain the plan to you.



BLOOD CLOTS

Major surgery or spending too much time in bed or the chair can increase your risk of developing a blood clot. Blood clots can cause pain, swelling, rashes, or seriously damage your arms or legs. The clot can sometimes break off and travel to your lungs where it can block the blood flow to your lungs. This is called a Pulmonary Embolus. Without blood flow, the lungs cannot send oxygen to the rest of your body, and you may die.

Your risk of developing a blood clot will be assessed by doctors on an individual basis. Ask your doctor or nurse about your level of risk.

- ✓ Tell your doctor or nurse if you, or a close family member have had a blood clot before.
- ✓ Make sure you take any tablets or injections that your doctor prescribes to reduce your risk of developing a blood clot.
- ✓ Keep your compression stockings or calf compressors on.
- ✓ Keep moving your toes or knees if safe to do so.
- ✓ Avoid sitting down or lying in bed for long periods. Not moving increases your risk of blood clots.
- ✓ Walk as often as your doctor/nurse/physiotherapist recommends.
- ✓ Drink plenty of water.

✓ Stop smoking

Before you leave hospital, ask your doctor or nurse what medications to take or physical activity to do when you go home. It is important to follow their instructions to reduce your risk of developing a clot.

Tell your nurse if you experience any of these symptoms:

- lots of pain/swelling or redness in your legs or arms
- pain in your lungs or chest, or finding it hard to breathe
- blood when you cough, as this can be a sign of a blood clot that has travelled to your lungs, which is very dangerous and could cause death.



INFECTIONS

Illness or surgery can reduce your ability to fight an infection – even something like the common cold. Germs are often spread on our hands, so practising what we call ‘hand hygiene’ is very important.

- ✓ Use soap, liquid hand rub or hand wipes to keep your hands clean.
- ✓ Wash your hands before eating, after going to the toilet, or after coughing and sneezing.
- ✓ Use soap when washing in the shower. If you have had an operation, talk to your nurse about keeping the wound dry.
- ✓ Do not touch bandages, dressings or drips.
- ✓ We encourage you to ask our staff if they have cleaned their hands – this is especially important before they touch your wound or intravenous drip.
- ✓ If your family, friends or carers have an infection, ask them not to visit until they have recovered.
- ✓ All visitors should wash their hands or use hand rub when arriving and leaving the hospital.



NUTRITION

Eating well in hospital is important. It will help you recover and prevent complications.

Being unwell can make you under-nourished so it is important that nutrition issues are addressed early.

Please tell our staff if you:

- have recently lost weight
- have not eaten much in the past five days or longer
- have diabetes
have problems with chewing or swallowing
- take nutritional supplement drinks
- have special food or drink requirements due to a special diet, religious or cultural beliefs, or personal taste

Ask for someone to help you during meal times if you need it.

If you have not been weighed, ask staff to weigh you. Tell staff your normal weight and height.

If you feel you are not getting enough food or are required to go without food for a prolonged period please speak to a member of staff.

PROBLEMS WITH MEMORY, THINKING OR COMMUNICATING

Problems with memory, thinking or communicating can be common in elderly persons when they are taken out of their usual environment, had an operation or anaesthetic, have an underlying infection, are dehydrated or constipated or in response to new or changed medications. These problems can be temporary or long term and can be highly distressing for the person and their family. For older people in hospital, dementia and delirium are the most common causes of cognitive impairment.

WHAT CAN FAMILIES AND CARERS DO?

Let doctors or nursing staff know if the person you care for is not their normal self on admission or at any time during their hospital stay. Let the treating team know if you have any concerns about the memory, thinking or behaviour of the person you care for. Also let the treating team know if the person has been diagnosed with dementia. Let the doctors or nursing staff know about the person you care for, in particular their routine and how they can be comforted if they are distressed in your absence.

For more information on cognitive impairment speak to the treating team or ask for a copy of the SVHM Delirium brochure.

FOLLOW UP CARE AFTER YOU LEAVE HOSPITAL

When you leave the hospital, your General Practitioner will receive a summary outlining your diagnosis, treatment and plan for follow-up.

It is recommended you make an appointment to see your General Practitioner after you leave hospital.

If needed, a follow up appointment with your specialist or an out-patient clinic will be made for you before you leave hospital.

Any community services required for follow up care will be arranged for you before you leave hospital.

YOUR HEALTHCARE RIGHTS

The Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights outline the rights of all people in all places where health care is provided in Australia. It describes what you, or someone you care for, can expect when receiving health care.

I have a right to:

Access

- Healthcare services and treatment that meets my needs

Safety

- Receive safe and high-quality health care that meets national standards
- Be cared for in an environment that is safe and makes me feel safe

Respect

- Be treated as an individual, and with dignity and respect.
- Have my culture, identity, beliefs and choices recognised and respected

Partnership

- Ask questions and be involved in open and honest communication
- Make decisions with my healthcare provider, to the extent that I choose and am able to
- Include the people that I want in planning and decision-making

Information

- Clear information about my condition, the possible benefits and risks of different tests and treatments, so I can give my informed consent
- Receive information about services, waiting times and costs
- Be given assistance, when I need it, to help me to understand and use health information
- Access my health information
- Be told if something has gone wrong during my health care, how it happened, how it may affect me and what is being done to make care safe

Privacy

- Have my personal privacy respected
- Have information about me and my health kept secure and confidential

Give feedback

- Provide feedback or make a complaint without it affecting the way I am treated
- Have my concerns addressed in a transparent and timely way
- Share my experience and participate to improve the quality of care and health services

For more information, please ask a member of staff or visit safetyandquality.gov.au/your-rights



YOUR HEALTH. YOUR VOICE. YOUR CHOICE.

We want to provide a welcoming and safe environment for all our patients and visitors. It's important to us that you are involved and informed about your care, your own personal needs are valued, and your voice is heard.

We offer a range of services to support you. Ask a staff member for details or a copy of the following information booklets. Some booklets are translated into other languages, or patients (and carers) can ask for an interpreter to help them.

You can also download the booklets using the following QR code.



- **Welcome to St. Vincent's Hospital Melbourne** booklet is the essential guide to our services and facilities, including information about interpreters, support for the deaf and hard of hearing, and our Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer service.

- **Your privacy** describes how we collect, store, and protect the confidentiality of your personal information.
- **Your feedback** describes how to pass on a compliment, raise a concern, or make a complaint. If you're not satisfied with the care we've provided, we want to hear from you. As a first step, we encourage you to raise your concerns with the staff caring for you. Your care and experience is important to us, and we welcome your feedback.



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This booklet draws on the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards developed by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health.



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