



Keeping you safe at St Vincent's



**ST VINCENT'S
HOSPITAL**
MELBOURNE

A FACILITY OF ST VINCENT'S HEALTH AUSTRALIA

Welcome to St Vincent's. We're here for *you*.

Thank you for choosing St Vincent's Hospital. For 120 years, St Vincent's has been providing the highest standards of care, driven by our concern for others, especially those in need.

It is our pleasure to care for you. Your safety, comfort and wellbeing are important to us, so please tell us if there is anything we can do to improve your experience.

Prof Patricia O'Rourke
Chief Executive Officer



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 pressure injury increases when you're unwell or have had surgery. In this booklet we look at some of the most 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. Don't be afraid to 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. This booklet lists some of the simple things you can do to stay safe in hospital.



Identification

You will be given an identification band when you're admitted to hospital. Staff may refer to it as an 'ID band' or a 'wrist band'. It will include information like your name and date of birth. The band will be placed on your wrist or leg.

- ✓ Make sure you're wearing the ID band at all times.
- ✓ Make sure the information on the ID band is correct.
- ✓ If you have any allergies to medication, food or materials like latex, make sure you have a red ID band.
- ✓ Staff should check your ID band before every test or procedure and before giving you any medication. They will also ask for your name and other details verbally.
- ✓ 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. Please tell us if you are worried about a recent change in your condition.



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
- medicated creams
- puffers/inhalers
- eye drops



- ✓ Bring all of your medicines to hospital with you.
- ✓ Keep an up-to-date list of your medicines and show it to our staff when you're admitted.
- ✓ Ask for an updated list of medicines before you go home. This list will be helpful for your local doctor and pharmacist.
- ✓ Tell us if you've had allergies or bad reactions to medicines in the past.
- ✓ While you're in hospital don't be afraid to ask what medicines you're receiving and why. We're here to help.



Falls

Falling over is more likely in hospital because you're in an unfamiliar environment and physically weaker than usual. Falls are the most common cause of injury in hospital and can delay your recovery – that's why it's important that staff, patients and carers work together to reduce the risk.

Every bed has a call bell – make sure you can reach yours.

- ✓ Use the call bell to ask for help 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.
- ✓ Always wear supportive, flat, non-slip shoes or slippers.
- ✓ If you use a walking frame or stick, glasses or hearing aids, bring them to hospital and keep them nearby.
- ✓ Turn the light on so you can see clearly.
- ✓ Try to walk and stay active when you have family, friends and staff to help you.
- ✓ Listen to the advice and recommendations of our staff – it takes time to recover from an illness and you may need more assistance with walking than you realise.



Family or visitors can help too.

- ✓ If your relative or friend is confused, stay with them as much as possible.
- ✓ Let a staff member know when you leave.

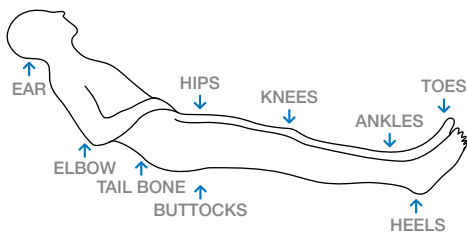


Pressure injuries

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, have limited sensation or circulation, or 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

Medication, surgery, or being confined to bed can increase your risk of developing a blood clot in your legs or lungs. Your risk of developing a blood clot will be assessed by us, but please feel free to ask your doctor or nurse about your level of risk.

- ✓ 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 on.
- ✓ Avoid sitting or lying in bed for long periods.
- ✓ Walk as often as your doctor recommends.
- ✓ Before you leave hospital, ask your doctor or nurse what to do when you go home.



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.
- ✓ Clean your hands before eating, after going to the toilet, or after coughing and sneezing.
- ✓ Use soap when washing in the shower.
- ✓ Do not touch bandages, dressings or drips.
- ✓ If the intravenous lines, tubes or drains inserted into your body become red, swollen or painful, report it to your nurse or doctor straight away.
- ✓ 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've recovered.
- ✓ All visitors should wash their hands or use hand rub when arriving and leaving the hospital.



Handover

During your stay you may receive care from doctors, nurses, pharmacists and allied health staff. They need to keep each other up-to-date about your condition and treatment – this practice is called clinical handover. You are an important part of the process. We encourage you to ask questions.



Your health. Your voice.

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

We offer a range of services and resources to support you. Ask a staff member for details or the following free resources may be helpful. Copies are available in every Care Centre – some are translated into other languages or you can ask for an interpreter.

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

The **Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights** describes the rights of patients using the Australian health system. The Charter is available in 27 languages.

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 treating you. Your care and your experience is important to us so we welcome your feedback.



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With thanks to Austin Health and Alfred Health.

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