

General Information

1. Be an active member of your health care team.

This means getting involved in every decision about your health care. Research shows that patients who are more involved with their care get better results. If you have concerns or don't understand some aspect of your care while in hospital, ask questions.

2. Learn about your condition and treatments by asking your doctor and other health professionals involved in your care, and by consulting reliable sources.

Ask questions if you need more information or don't understand something. Make a list of questions before you meet with your health care provider or team, and write down the answers too.

Tell your health care provider the information in your own words to make sure you understand and can make an informed decision about your care.

Ask your doctor for the results of your tests and procedures.

BC HealthGuide is a useful online resource for reliable health information and advice to help you better understand and manage your health.

Your Medical Information

3. Keep a record or journal of your medical history.

- Past and present health conditions and any surgeries.
- Your immunization and vaccination history.
- All of your food, environment and medicine allergies and associated symptoms
- Your height and weight
- A list of your health care providers' names and phone numbers.

Medication Record

4. Keep a record of all your medication details.

Whenever you start a new medication, be sure to add it to your record. Write down the reason and date you started taking the medicine, and the times you must take it during the day. If you stop taking a medication, write down the date and the reason. Record any side effects or allergies you experience with any medication, and what to do if these should occur.

*** View Medical Worksheet at the end of this document ***

Medication Safety

5. Make sure that all of your doctors know about every medication you are taking.

This includes prescription and over-the-counter medicines, and dietary supplements such as vitamins and herbs.

At least once a year bring all of your medicines and supplements with you to your doctor to talk about them and find out if there are any problems. Keeping your medication records up to date is another good idea, and will help ensure you get the best quality care from all your healthcare providers.

6. Make sure your doctor knows about any allergies and adverse reactions you have had to medicines.

This will help you avoid getting a medicine that can harm you.

7. When your doctor writes you a prescription, make sure you can read it.

If you can't read your doctor's handwriting, your pharmacist might not be able to either.

8. Ask for information about your medicines in terms you can understand - both when your medicines are prescribed and when you receive them.

Questions you might ask:

- What is the medicine for?
- How am I supposed to take it, and for how long?
- What side effects are likely? What do I do if they occur?
- Is this medicine safe to take with other medicines or dietary supplements I am taking?
- What food, drink, or activities should I avoid while taking this medicine?

9. When you pick up your medicine from the pharmacy, make sure you are getting the medicine your doctor prescribed.

One study found that 88 percent of medicine errors involved patients being given the wrong drug or the wrong dose.

10. Make sure you understand the directions on your medicine labels.

Medicine labels can be hard to understand. For example, if the label says "take four doses daily" does this mean one dose every 6 hours around the clock, or just during regular waking hours? Ask your pharmacist to explain.

11. Ask your pharmacist for the best way to measure your liquid medicine.

Research shows that many people do not understand the right way to measure liquid medicines. For example, many people use household teaspoons, which often do not hold a true teaspoon of liquid. Special devices like marked syringes can help you to measure the right dose. But always make sure you know how to use the device.

If you have questions or concerns about your medication after normal business hours, you can consult with a pharmacist from 5pm to 9am daily through BC NurseLine.

BCNurseLine
24 hours toll-free in BC 1-866-215-4700
Local calling in Greater Vancouver 604-215-4700
Deaf/hearing-impaired call toll-free 1-866-889-4700

Hospital Stays

12. Make sure the information on your identification bracelet is correct.

Although errors on patient bracelets are uncommon, it's easy to check and well worth the effort. Even a simple error can potentially have serious consequences.

13. Make sure the medications you receive in hospital are the same as those you take at home.

Although errors on patient bracelets are uncommon, it's easy to check and well worth the effort. Even a simple error can potentially have serious consequences.

14. While you are in hospital wash your hands and ask everyone who has direct contact with you whether they have washed their hands. This includes health care staff and any visitors you may have.

Hand washing is an important way to prevent the spread of infections in hospitals. A recent study found that when patients checked whether health care workers washed their hands, the workers washed their hands more often and used more soap.

15. Question anything that does not make sense to you or that seems unusual.

Report any changes in your condition to your care provider as soon as you can, regardless of how insignificant they may seem.

16. When you are being discharged from hospital, ask your doctor to explain the treatment plan you should follow at home.

This includes information about your medicines and finding out when you can get back to your regular activities. Research shows that at discharge time, doctors assume their patients understand more than they actually do about what they should or should not do when they return home.

Other steps you can take...

17. Make sure that all health professionals involved in your care have important health information about you.

Do not assume that everyone knows everything they need to know about you and your condition.

Medication Record

Name: _____

Care Providers (name and number): _____

Last Reviewed (date and with whom): _____

Birthdate: _____

Height & Weight: _____

Allergies and responses: _____

Name of Medication (Brand and Generic)	Date started	Reason for taking	Amount & times taken	Date stopped