

One standard,
some recommendations
and a commitment
to patient safety.

por la
seguridad
de los pacientes

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A standard

Patient safety means ensuring medical assistance is free from avoidable ill-effects. Improving safety is a shared task in which the collaboration of patients is essential and for which there is a tried and tested effective general standard:

Ask whenever you are in doubt.

The following recommendations, aimed at patients attending health centres and hospitals every day, have been drawn up using the knowledge and experience of the professionals of the Aragón Health Service, the representatives of patient associations and the users participating in a range of working groups at the 1st Aragón Patient Symposium on Patient Safety held in Saragossa on the 7th of June 2007.

Some recommendations aimed at patients

1) Request information on health personnel providing you with assistance. You should know who your doctor and nursing staff are; and their names.

2) We all have questions and forget things. Before going to a medical appointment or being looked at in a hospital, you should think through all the questions you have and note down everything you would like to comment on and ask so you do not forget;

Get used to storing all the reports from medical appointments and previous visits in the same place.

3) Tell you doctor about all the medicines you are taking.

In particular those you know you are allergic too, or which have caused problems on some previous occasion.

4) If you are also taking any other products (herbal remedies, vitamins...) ask your doctor if they can be consumed at the same time. And tell him or her if you are following any special diet or if you habitually drink alcohol, smoke or take other substances.

5) If you take medicines prescribed by different specialists, check with your family doctor to ensure there are no incompatibilities or products of a similar composition.

6) Make sure you clearly understand all the information on your treatment and possible side effects or undesired results.

Take the medicine in the way in which it has been prescribed, and do not stop taking it without asking your doctor first.

Make sure it does not affect your ability to drive or work and whenever you have any doubts, consult with your doctor or pharmacist.

7) Pay close attention whenever you buy or consume medicines, because they sometimes have similar names or packaging. That is why at home and in the hospital care must be taken to ensure you take the correct product.

8) Further tests and investigations do not always mean better medical attention. In order to avoid repetitions and unnecessary annoyance, note down the diagnostic tests requested for you, such as analyses, X-rays or others.

Make sure you know the date on which they must be undertaken and the conditions in which you must attend the hospital or health centre (not having eaten, with a special preparation, etc.).

If you think you might be pregnant, you should tell your doctor, because some tests and treatments are not recommended if this is the case.

9) Whenever necessary, request information from health professionals on self-help standards, social and welfare resources, support groups and associations of patients with the same problem as you.

10) Hospital infections are one of the main health risks during your stay in a hospital, and hands are the most frequent transmission mechanism. You should ensure you and your family members meet hygiene standards for the hands and any other hygiene standards recommended by hospital staff, as should the professionals caring for you.

11) During critical moments, make sure you are always accompanied by a member of your family or a friend. Stand up for your rights to confidentiality and decent treatment, if necessary.

12) There are no unsuitable questions, but there are inappropriate times to ask. Agree upon the most suitable moment to resolve queries with the health staff, but never forget to ask.

When you sign a consent form for treatment, participation in a study or any diagnostic test, read it first and make sure you understand the risks and ask if you have any queries. You have the right and obligation to know the risks before taking a decision.

13) Before leaving hospital, read the discharge form and make sure you have understood it.

Make sure you have no doubts about the medicines you have to take: the dose, the way you take them, what you can eat and drink without any problem, what you should avoid, when and where you need to go for your next check-up, or when you can do sport again, or drive or go about your normal life.

14) If you believe there are things that could be improved, use the available channels to make complaints and suggestions. We like improving and your collaboration is essential.

15) Despite the fact that all our patients are different, we also recommend you talk with other people who have suffered similar problems to yours. If they provide you with information that contradicts what you have been told by your doctor or nurse, or if you encounter contradictory or surprising information on the Internet, do not hesitate to discuss this with them.

A commitment

Everyone makes mistakes and all organizations have failings.

Help us make our failings and mistakes less probable and less serious by taking all the above-mentioned recommendations into consideration.

Keep in mind the fact that as professionals we are committed to doing everything possible to avoid them.