Acknowledgements

Patient First project: Prepared and co-ordinated by Ms Karen Carey, Consultant

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Office of Safety and Quality in Health Care, Department of Health
Health Consumers’ Council of Western Australia

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We also acknowledge Dr John Paling PhD and the Risk Communication Institute (www.riskcomm.com) for granting us permission to use the Paling Palette© of 1,000 people.

Disclaimer

The ‘Patient First’ program provides health information on a range of clinical issues for the benefit of the public. The ‘Patient First’ program has been developed by the WA Council for Safety and Quality in Health Care and the Department of Health as an information source only. The clinical information contained in the ‘Patient First’ resources is not comprehensive, nor is it intended to be used to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease nor should it be used for therapeutic purposes or as a substitute for your own health practitioner’s advice. Before acting or relying on any of the information contained in the ‘Patient First’ resources, you should ask your health practitioner for appropriate information and advice about managing your illness or condition.

The Department of Health provides the ‘Patient First’ program to the reader on the basis that while every reasonable attempt has been made to ensure its accuracy, no guarantee can be given that any publications that comprise the program are free from error or omission.

The Department of Health, the Minister for Health, the State of Western Australia and their employees and agents do not accept liability to any person for the information or advice provided in the ‘Patient First’ program or incorporated into it by reference or for loss or damages incurred as a result of reliance upon the material contained in the ‘Patient First’ program.

If you require urgent medical assistance you can contact your general practitioner or contact HealthDirect on 1800 022 222. However, if you need urgent treatment, call an ambulance or attend a hospital emergency centre immediately.

Additional copies

Additional copies of the ‘Patient First’ brochure and DVD may be obtained from:

Office of Safety and Quality in Health Care
Health Policy and Clinical Reform Division
Western Australian Department of Health
189 Royal Street, East Perth Western Australia 6004
Tel: (08) 9222 4080 Fax: (08) 9222 4324
E-mail: safetyandquality@health.wa.gov.au
Web: http://www.safetyandquality.health.wa.gov.au
Foreword

As the peak body representing the voice of consumers in the WA health system, the Health Consumers’ Council is extremely pleased to have been asked to collaborate on this exciting new initiative in patient safety and quality.

WA has an extremely progressive health care system that is a world leader. Our hospitals are complex networks of services all working together to achieve the best outcome for the patient. However, in any complex system there is always room for error. This said, there are many steps that patients and their families/carers can take to ensure that their journey has the best result. This booklet has been designed to provide information to help patients determine the best plan to achieve the most satisfactory outcome during their time in the WA health system.

I commend this publication to you and encourage you to let us know if you have ideas that may be incorporated in a latter edition of the booklet.

Tim Benson
Chairperson
Health Consumers’ Council of WA
November 2006

On behalf of the WA Council for Safety and Quality in Health Care, I am delighted to introduce the ‘Patient First’ Program, which has been developed by the Council, in collaboration with the Health Consumers’ Council and the Department of Health.

The ‘Patient First’ program, for the first time, places patients and their carers at the forefront of the clinical care process.

By using our valuable health services appropriately, by carefully considering the risks and benefits of your treatment before you enter hospital, you can help to keep yourself well and help to reduce medical errors in the WA health system.

I commend the ‘Patient First’ program to you. The Department of Health will distribute the ‘Patient First’ resource materials to community groups and to Area Health Services across WA.

If you would like further information, please contact the Department of Health by telephone on (08) 9222 4080 or by e-mail: safetyandquality@health.wa.gov.au

Information is also available by visiting our website:

I wish you safe care and a quality experience with our world class health care system.

Professor Bryant Stokes AM RFD
Chairman
WA Council for Safety & Quality in Health Care
October 2006
The Department of Health is introducing a number of new initiatives to foster and support community and consumer engagement in the delivery of health care to Western Australians.

Over the past year, the Department of Health has implemented a standardised clinical governance system in the WA health care system.

The WA Clinical Governance Framework includes the goal of engaging consumers as partners at all levels of health care. This will be achieved through increasing consumer participation in health service planning, delivery and evaluation, enhancing patient and consumer knowledge through education and communication, promoting consumers as partners in health care and ensuring consumer expectations and experiences are valued.

It gives me much pleasure to introduce to you the ‘Patient First’ Program, which was jointly developed by the Health Consumers’ Council of WA, WA Council for Safety and Quality in Health Care and the Department of Health.

This unique patient-centred program aims to improve your health care by enabling you to be an active, involved and informed participant in your health care experience and management.

I hope this booklet is a valuable resource to you and helps you to access appropriate health care services when you need them.

Dr Neale Fong
Director General
Department of Health
October 2006
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Informed consent

Your treatment is your choice, and when it comes to having an operation or test which involves risk, you (or your parent/guardian) need to give what is called ‘informed consent’. Informed consent requires your health practitioner to discuss with you or your parent/guardian the pros and cons of each alternative treatment option and significant risks that are associated with the procedure. This will enable you or your parent/guardian to compare the options and make the decision that is best for you at that time.

Before giving your consent, ask your health practitioner:

1. What are my treatment options?

The discussion should include information about alternative treatment options, including different types of surgery and choices of medical devices, and the likely consequences of not having any treatment or procedure at all. You are also entitled to seek a second opinion.

2. What are the expected outcomes of each option?

Successful treatment can never be absolutely assured and different procedures carry different risks. You need to be aware of the potential pros and cons of each alternative treatment, including known complications, so that you can decide which of the treatments is best for you.

3. What is the likelihood that success and complications will occur?

The likelihood of success and complications varies with each treatment option. You need to know how often these complications occur so that you can weigh up the risks and decide which option best suits your circumstances.

Note: Some procedures that are new or uncommon may not have sufficient research to support meaningful statistics and your doctor will make recommendations based on other information e.g. personal surgical experience, training or expert knowledge. Alternative questions to ask your health practitioners are provided on the next page.

You can decide not to proceed with the treatment for which you have consented at any time by advising your health practitioner.
What is meant by consent to treatment?

Every patient has the right to participate in any decision about their health care or medical treatment. As a rule, health practitioners are required to inform you of the nature of the proposed treatment and to gain your consent for all treatment, before it starts.

Consent is a patient’s agreement for a health practitioner to provide treatment, including any medical or surgical management, care, therapy, test or procedure.

The process and requirements for obtaining consent may vary depending on the competency and age of the patient. However, it will involve the following steps:

1. A discussion about the pros and cons of each treatment option.
2. The patient decides what course of action to take.
3. The health practitioner gains the patient’s consent for a specific treatment, having appropriately disclosed any material risks for that specific treatment.
4. The health practitioner records and documents the consent process.

Understanding your treatment options

Health care and medical treatments are often complex and you may receive information that you do not understand at a time when you may be distressed by your condition and diagnosis. Understanding this complex information is crucial to the decisions you make.

When making your decision about whether or not to undergo a treatment, you should ask your health practitioner the following questions:

- Why do you think this procedure is appropriate for me?
- Is this procedure new or uncommon and is there sufficient research to support your recommendation?
- How many times have you conducted this procedure yourself?
- What have been the outcomes of the procedures you have conducted?
- Do you have any other information that will help me to make an informed decision?

When the treatment is not urgent, you should take your time to consider the information you have been given by your health practitioner. If you do not understand the information you have been given, ask questions. If you still do not understand, ask more questions.

Whether or not medical treatment is to take place is your decision. Although health practitioners have extensive knowledge of the treatments that are proposed for you, only you know about your lifestyle and preferences and only you can decide which risks are acceptable to you and which risks are not acceptable. You have the right to withdraw your consent at any time prior to the start of the procedure.
Further Information

If you would like more information about your condition or treatment options, we recommend that you contact your health practitioner. You can find other sources of information in the Your Health Information section on page 29 of this booklet and in the Health Services Directory on pages 35-38 of this booklet.

For more information about the consent process, ask your health practitioner or visit our website at: www.health.wa.gov.au/safetyandquality/
Making the right decisions for you

Most people make complex decisions every day, often without realising it. For example, each morning if you drive to work, there are probably several routes you can take, and you choose your route based on factors like the amount of traffic, the number of sets of lights and other obstacles. Making decisions about which treatment option is best for you can also be a difficult task, and for some of you, it may seem quite daunting. When deciding which treatment option is best for you, you should consider your personal and family needs, the expected outcomes of each option and the likelihood that success or complications will occur.

Doctors and other health practitioners know a lot about the treatments that they recommend, but only you know about your lifestyle, the demands of your job and family and your personal needs and preferences. When making a decision, you should take into account the following issues:

1. **Treatment options**

Most conditions will have more than one treatment option, and each option may have different risks and expected outcomes. It is important that you know about the pros and cons of each treatment option, in order for you to give your informed consent for the treatment or procedure.

2. **Possible risks and benefits**

For each treatment option, you need to know what the possible risks and benefits are, and then make a decision, from your own perspective, about which outcomes you are willing to accept.

For example, a doctor may recommend a certain type of surgery on your eye that the doctor knows has the highest chance of success, but that there may be a small risk of ongoing double vision. You may be willing to accept this outcome if you are retired but not if you are a truck driver and would lose your job as a result of double vision.

3. **Likelihood of success and complications**

It is important for you to know the likelihood of success and possible complications for each of the treatment options. For example, one type of surgery may mean that you are in hospital and recuperating for a much shorter period. However, there may also be a two-fold increase in the risk of complications from internal bleeding compared to another type of surgery.

Once you know your treatment options and you have carefully assessed the risks and benefits of each option, you can make an informed decision whether or not to proceed with the treatment in consultation with your doctor, based on your own needs and preferences.
Understanding your risk

As part of the consent process, your doctor will provide you with an explanation of the possible risks and benefits of a procedure. This explanation is an essential part of ensuring that consent is “informed.” Following this explanation, you may take the information home for further consideration, or agree to sign a consent form to proceed with the treatment.

When discussing the risks of a procedure, you should consider the following points:

- the benefits and risks of health care treatment can never be absolutely guaranteed;
- a risk is important (material risk) if it influences the decision/s you make;
- the Consent to Treatment Policy for WA Health Services requires a health practitioner to inform you about risks with a probability of greater than 1 in 1,000. This explanation will include frequent and serious risks, as well as the short and long term (ongoing) risks.

Your doctor may use a pictorial diagram to assist him/her to explain the significance of any risks to you. One example of a pictorial diagram is the Paling Palette®, presented overleaf. The Paling Palette® tool is designed to show the number of people out of 1,000 who might be expected to experience some particular event, and, at the same time, it shows the numbers who are not likely to be affected.
An example of a pictorial tool that may be used to explain the risks involved in health care

The following example shows the risks of a woman producing a child with Down Syndrome. The odds for a 39 year old woman of producing a child with Down Syndrome or other chromosome abnormality is 12 out of 1,000 (marked in red). When explaining the risks to the patient, the doctor would fill in the relevant number of figures, explaining the positive and negative outcomes simultaneously and explaining the significance of the risk for the patient.

In order to determine the risk of your child having a chromosomal abnormality, a procedure called an amniocentesis may be performed. There is a 4 in 1,000 risk of you having a miscarriage as a result of the amniocentesis. This risk is marked in black. In order for you to decide whether to proceed with your pregnancy, you will need to consider these risks carefully.
Understanding the risks of my procedure

When your doctor is explaining the risks of the procedure to you, fill in the following page in your own words. Ask the doctor to fill in the relevant number of figures on the Paling Palette© of 1,000 people provided overleaf, and to explain the possible positive and negative outcomes and any significant risks you may have as a patient.

My doctor has informed me that my condition is called: ____________________________________

The procedure I will be having is called: ____________________________________

I understand that this will involve: ____________________________________

My doctor has explained to me that the benefits and possible positive and negative outcomes of me having this procedure are:

1. ____________________________________
2. ____________________________________
3. ____________________________________
4. ____________________________________

My doctor has explained to me that the possible risks of this procedure are:

1. ____________________________________
2. ____________________________________
3. ____________________________________
4. ____________________________________

I understand that the risk of me experiencing an adverse event during the procedure is __________ percent. When using a Paling Palette© the risk can be calculated as __________ in 1,000.

Ask your doctor to fill in the relevant number of figures on the Paling Palette© of 1,000 provided overleaf. Your doctor may wish to use a different colour pen to highlight each risk on the palette (overleaf).
Note to the Doctor:

When explaining the risks to the patient, translate the percentage risk into a rate of x in 1,000, then fill in the relevant number of figures below, explaining the positive and negative outcomes simultaneously and the significance of any risks for the patient.
Your rights and responsibilities

Health care comes with a special set of rights and responsibilities. Patients have a right to health care that is respectful, responsive, safe and effective. Patients have a responsibility to provide all relevant health information to your health practitioner, and to treat staff and other patients with respect.

As a patient you have a right to:

- receive free public hospital services as a public patient, or to choose to be treated as a private patient in a public hospital;
- receive treatment prioritised in order of clinical need and to be informed of the level at which you have been classified;
- access a basic range of public health services including interpreters;
- agree or refuse to participate in health professional training or medical research;
- be treated with respect and dignity;
- receive a clear explanation for any proposed treatment including alternatives and possible risks before agreeing to, or refusing treatment;
- seek a second opinion;
- receive information about your continuing health care prior to leaving hospital and to have your contact details kept up to date;
- apply for access to your medical records under the Freedom of Information (FoI) Act 1992; and
- confidentiality of your medical records.

The Mental Health Act 1996 provides a number of additional rights for patients receiving psychiatric treatment. For further information, please contact the Office of the Chief Psychiatrist on (08) 9222 4462 or visit the following website: www.chiefpsychiatrist.health.wa.gov.au/publications

If you choose to be treated as a private patient in a public hospital, you will be charged for the cost of the medical services. You will also be charged for accommodation and related costs, including the costs of artificial body parts.

Under current Medicare arrangements, Medicare will refund 75% of the Medicare recommended fee for medical services and procedures provided to private inpatients. Your private health insurance fund may refund the remaining 25% of the recommended fee. Your private insurance fund may also meet the cost or a proportion of the cost of accommodation and medical devices.

However, you will have to meet any ‘gap’ charges raised by a medical practitioner in excess of the recommended fee. This amount should be discussed with your doctor before treatment starts.
Patient responsibilities

In order to provide high quality health care, your health practitioner needs to know important information about you including your medical history, any prescription or over-the-counter medications you are taking, any change in your condition and any problems you have with your treatment.

It is your responsibility to:
- tell medical staff about your medical history and any relevant family medical history;
- tell medical staff about any medications you are using, including prescription and over the counter medications or complementary medications;
- tell medical staff about any change in your condition or problems you have with your treatment;
- let medical staff know about any special needs you have including dietary, cultural or religious needs;
- be courteous and respect the role of hospital staff. When people behave aggressively or staff feel threatened, they have the right to withdraw care;
- follow treatment instructions or let staff know if you cannot, or do not wish to do so;
- advise staff if you do not wish students in training to be involved in your care; and
- keep hospital appointments or advise the hospital in advance if you are unable to attend. Refer to the attached health service directory for telephone numbers for hospital operators.

Responsibilities of health care professionals

In providing your care, all health care professionals have a responsibility to:
- show respect and take account of your wishes;
- listen attentively;
- address your fears by providing appropriate information;
- speak in words you can understand;
- answer your questions honestly;
- inform and educate you about your illness, including:
  - your treatment options;
  - the risks and benefits of each option; and
  - the likelihood of success and complications occurring.
- inform you about what you can expect from your treatment;
- gain your consent to treatment;
- gain your consent to any research to be performed during the course of treatment;
- provide appropriate information and time to enable you to make an informed decision about your treatment; and
- assess and inform you of the level of clinical need that has been applied to your case and the reasons for any delay in treatment that may occur.
Comments, complaints and feedback

Health service staff are committed to continuous quality improvement and appreciate that comments, complaints and feedback from patients provide an excellent opportunity to see their services from the patient’s perspective.

Every hospital is required to have a process for patients to provide comments or feedback about the quality of health care, including complaints. You can obtain information about this process by contacting a staff member on the ward, or the manager of the hospital’s Customer Liaison Department.

The hospital will deal with your comments and complaints as promptly as possible. You should receive an acknowledgement of your comment or complaint within five working days of it being received by the hospital. However, it may take several days or weeks for someone from the hospital to get back to you with a final response.

If you believe that an error in your treatment has had a negative impact on your health, you should report this immediately to your nurse or doctor. A complaint can still be made, but it is most important that any damage to your health is minimised by immediate action.

To support continuous quality improvement, all public hospitals and health services in WA use a Statewide system to report and manage incidents. Analysis of the information enables preventative steps to be put in place to reduce the occurrence of similar events.

Reporting of incidents by clinicians to this system is voluntary, so if you believe you have suffered from an adverse event, you should discuss with your nurse or other health practitioner whether it has been reported. If it has not been reported, ask them how you can report the incident.

To ensure that your feedback, comments or complaints have an effect on improving the quality of health care services, you need to ensure that the report is made to the right people. For further information ask a staff member on the ward, or the manager of the hospital’s Customer Liaison Department.

Getting it right

Health services benefit from positive comments when they are getting it right. By acknowledging members of staff who provide excellent care and by analysing what worked, the standard of care may then be replicated across the wider system.

If you have received excellent care please feel free to provide feedback to hospital staff and contribute to continuous quality improvement.

A copy of the Western Australian Public Patients’ Hospital Charter is available from your hospital, the Department of Health (www.health.wa.gov.au) or the Health Consumers’ Council of WA (www.hcc-wa.asn.au/).
Managing your medications safely

One of the common causes of adverse incidents (unintentional harm) is when medications are prescribed, administered or taken incorrectly. Medication errors can happen while you are in hospital or at home. Medication errors may be caused, for example, by your medications having the same or similar brand names or packaging, or when one medication interferes with another medication. A medication error may also occur if you miss a dose, take the wrong dose, or misunderstand the written and oral instructions. Your health condition may also increase the possibility of side effects from your medication.

To manage your medications safely, the following steps should be taken.

1. Keep a written record of the medications you take at home, including complementary and non-prescription medicines and inform hospital staff of them as soon as possible.

2. Ask your doctor what your new prescription medication is for, what the side effects or complications are, and whether it is safe to mix it with your other medications.

3. Write down the medications you are receiving in hospital and what time you normally get them, including intravenous (IV) fluids. If you don’t get your medications at the right time, if the IV fluids run too fast or slow, or you are given different medications to those you have written down, ask your nurse before taking them.

4. Tell hospital staff immediately if you feel unwell after taking medication.

5. Make sure that you understand all of the instructions you have been given about your medications before you leave the hospital. This includes any instructions about whether you should continue to take the medications you were taking before coming into hospital.

6. Use a dosage box to reduce the likelihood of mixing up your medication, making dosage errors or forgetting to take your medication. You can buy a dosage box from pharmacies or supermarkets. Alternatively, many pharmacists will prepare a dosage box for you for a fee.

7. Speak to hospital staff about any medication that you believe you have been refused, or if your medication is delayed.

8. Get your medication from the same pharmacy every time, so your pharmacist can keep a record of the medication you are taking and alert you to any dangerous interactions.

9. Ask your health practitioner for any written Consumer Medicines Information, called CMI, that you can refer to when required. If they are unable to provide it, you can download the information from the ‘Consumers’ page of the National Prescribing Service website at: www.nps.org.au/consumers
Always write down the medications that you are taking so that in an emergency health care staff can access the information quickly. You will find a Patient Medication Record Form on pages 39-42 of this booklet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medication</th>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>What was it for prescribed for?</th>
<th>How much do I use?</th>
<th>Date started</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: paracetamol</td>
<td>500mg tablets</td>
<td>Arthritis pain in knee</td>
<td>2 tablets, 4 times/day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table adapted from the National Prescribing Service’s Medimate Brochure ([www.nps.org.au](http://www.nps.org.au))

**Managing your medications safely**

Sometimes you may need to take several medication at different times and in varying doses. Your medical condition and lifestyle may also influence which medicines are best for you.

All medicines have benefits and risks. To ensure you get the best result from them, it is important to use medicines as directed by your doctor and pharmacist.

When you are being prescribed a medication, make sure you tell your health care professional:

- the health problem you are being treated for;
- any other health problems you may have;
- other medications that you are taking, including natural and herbal medicines and medicines from the supermarket or pharmacy;
- any drug allergies you are aware of;
- any problems you have had with medication in the past;
- whether you are pregnant or breast feeding or whether there is a chance you may become pregnant while you are taking the medication;
- any lifestyle factors that may affect your health i.e. smoking, alcohol consumption, or use of recreational drugs; and
- your preferences and choices - can you choose between tablets and capsules? Is the same medication available at a cheaper price?

When you are in hospital, a nurse will provide your medications to you. It is important that you ask your nurse what each medication and dose is. If it is not what you expected, ask for an explanation.

Monitoring your medications can significantly reduce the risk of error and suffering an adverse reaction. If you are too unwell to monitor your medications ask a family member or friend to do this for you.
Informing yourself

Your doctor or pharmacist can give you a CMI leaflet about your medicine, for you to take home and read in your own time.

If they are unable to provide it, you can download information from the ‘Consumers’ page of the National Prescribing Service website at: www.nps.org.au/consumers

CMI leaflets are available for all prescription medicines and some medicines you buy without a prescription.

If you are unable to talk with your doctor, you can speak to a pharmacist by phoning:

National Prescribing Service Medicines Line

1300 888 763

Monday to Friday 9.00 am to 6.00 pm (EST)
for the cost of a local call.
Managing your medications safely

This table lists the questions you should ask your health care provider about any new medications. While in hospital, you may choose to ask only those questions in bold printing. However, before you leave the hospital to return home, make sure that you have all of the information you need to self-manage your medications well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is this medication for?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why am I using this medication and what improvement can I expect to get?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When will I start to see changes in my health?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How should I take the medication?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much should I take?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What time of the day should I take it?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What should I do if I forget to take a dose?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When should I stop using any of my medications?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do I have to finish all of the medication, or just use it until I feel better, or keep using it for a long time?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I start using this new medication, should I stop using any of my others?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Are there any special instructions that I need to follow?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any special instructions for using this medication e.g. do I take it before or after meals?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do I have to use a special delivery method (puffer/ spacer/patch/suppository)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the correct way to use it?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Will there be any side effects?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the known or expected side effects of this medication?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How likely is it that I will suffer from them?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any symptoms or signs that I should watch for?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What should I do if I suffer from a side effect?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will the side effects stop after a short period?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Are there any lifestyle issues I need to know about?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any medications or activities that I should avoid while taking this medication e.g. driving, contact sports, drinking alcohol?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do I need to monitor my diet while I am taking this medication?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do I need to have blood tests done or monitor my blood levels while I am taking this medication?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any storage instructions for the medication?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there any other information I need to know?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More information about medication safety can be obtained from your general practitioner or the National Prescribing Service Medicines Line: 1300 888 763
Correct patient, correct site, correct procedure

While operating on the wrong limb or removing the wrong kidney attracts media headlines, surgery on the wrong side or wrong site is very rare. But there are ways of reducing the risk even further.

Operating theatres and other clinical areas are busy and complex work environments, and doctors usually conduct many surgical or medical procedures each day.

To ensure that you receive the correct surgery or procedure on the correct site, you should:

1. **Ensure that your consent form specifies the correct procedure, site and side for the surgery or procedure.**

   Before the pre-operative medication is administered, the senior member of the clinical team will verify the correct site of the procedure/surgery against information written on your consent form or your medical record. If information is missing or incorrect, do not sign the consent form until the information is complete and correct. If you have already signed the form, ask to see it again to confirm that this information is correct.

2. **Ensure that your full name, date of birth, the type of procedure you are having, and the side and site of the procedure are verified.**

   Before receiving any medication, a member of the clinical team will ask you to state your full name, date of birth, the type of procedure you are having, and the side and site of the procedure. This information will be cross-checked against the information on your identification band, medical record and consent form.

3. **Ensure that the correct side and correct site of the surgery/procedure is marked on your skin with a water resistant marker pen.**

   A senior member of the clinical team will mark the correct site of the procedure/surgery on your skin with a water resistant marker pen before the administration of the pre-operative medication. If the mark is in the incorrect place or wears or washes off, inform staff immediately.

4. **Before the surgery or procedure starts, members of the clinical team will take a final ‘team time-out’ to verify the presence of the correct patient, the correct type of procedure to be performed and that the correct procedure site has been marked.**
Preventing falls

When you are already feeling unwell, having a fall can not only cause further injuries, but can also lead to a lack of confidence and independence. Many things can increase your risk of falling, including poor balance, low blood pressure, some medications, physical inactivity, unfamiliar environments, poor eyesight and unsafe footwear. There are things you can do to lower your risk of falling.

The following steps should be taken to lower your chance of having a fall in hospital.

1. Wear comfortable clothing that is not too long or loose and low-heeled, non-slip shoes that fit you well rather than slippers. Do not walk without footwear if you have therapeutic stockings on.

2. Take your time when getting up from a sitting position (particularly after emptying your bladder) or lying down and let staff know if you feel unwell or unsteady on your feet.

3. Bring any walking aids you already have with you to hospital and use them rather than the walls or furniture for balance. If staff recommend that you need assistance or supervision when walking, always ask them for assistance and wait for them to help you.

4. Bring your glasses with you to hospital. If you wear more than one pair, use the correct pair for walking. Be especially careful using bi-focal or multi-focal lenses.

5. Familiarise yourself with your room, its furniture and the bathroom. Advise staff if there is any clutter or spills that may cause you to fall.

6. Drink plenty of fluids.

When you return home, take the same precautions and try to be active every day, in as many ways as possible.

Adapted from the Australian Council on Safety and Quality in Health Care’s Falls prevention: Information for Patients and Carers and Best Practice Guidelines for Australian hospitals and Residential Aged Care Facilities (2005).
Falls can occur in hospital, at home or when you are out and about. Many falls can be prevented by taking some simple steps.

**Professional assessment**
Before you leave hospital ask your doctor or nurse to assess your risk of a fall. If you are at increased risk, seek further advice from hospital staff about what you can do to minimise your risk.

Once you are at home ask your doctor to review your muscle strength, balance and medications regularly.

If you do have a fall, make sure you discuss it with your doctor so that you do not fall again.

**Keep active**
Your physical wellbeing can be improved by increasing your physical activity over time. Doing exercise that increases your leg muscle strength and improves your balance is important. You can keep up your general fitness by walking for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week, even if you do it in small lots of 10 minutes.

**Walk tall**
The way you walk, called your ‘gait’, can increase your chance of having a fall. You can reduce the risk of falling by changing your gait and posture and walking with your head up.

**Vision**
It makes good sense to get your eyes checked regularly (every 12 months) and remember to give yourself time to get used to new glasses, especially bifocals.

**Outdoors**
Make sure that outdoor stairs or steps are well lit and have sturdy hand or grab rails. Repair uneven paths, decking or driveways. Keep pathways clear especially if you are carrying bulky items like washing or shopping.

**Out and about**
To reduce the risk of you having a fall, report any hazards in your community such as missing handrails, uneven paths, slippery surfaces or poor lighting. When shopping, take care on tiled floors and report any wet areas to your local council or shopping centre or store managers.
At home

When you leave hospital, you may still be affected by your condition. Below are tips to help reduce your risk of falling.

- Make sure your home is brightly lit especially on stairs or steps.
- Ensure walkways are free of electrical cords, furniture and other clutter. Remove rugs or mats that can slide or secure with double sided tape, velcro or tacks.
- Check that your home has bathroom and kitchen areas fitted with non-slip surfaces. Use non-slip mats in the bath and shower and by the toilet.
- Wipe up spills as soon as they happen.
- Install handrails by stairs or steps, and in bath rooms and toilets.
- Install night-lights in case you need to get up frequently during the night to go to the toilet. Alternatively, keep a torch by your bedside or have a bedside light that can be comfortably turned on before you get out of bed.
- Keep frequently used items in storage that are easy to reach to avoid having to use a step ladder or climb onto a chair.
- Be aware of pets when moving around in the house or garden.

If you need help with assessing the risks in your home or with making appropriate modifications, ask your doctor before you leave hospital or ask your general practitioner on your next visit. You should also ask them whether you qualify for government assistance.

Manage your medications by getting your medicines regularly reviewed and by taking an active role in choosing your medicines and understanding their effects.

Manage your health by reducing the effect of your condition in causing dizziness, confusion, light-headedness, slowed reactions, reduced awareness of surroundings, blurred vision or a drop in blood pressure. Learn as much as you can about your condition, have regular check-ups with your general practitioner to discuss any concerns and prevent complications by getting early treatment.

Improve your balance by reducing the effect of loss of muscle strength, reduced joint movement and stability, ear problems (including wax build-up), and sudden movement, especially getting up quickly. The best way to improve balance is to stay active and do at least 30 minutes of activity each day.

More information can be found by contacting the Department of Health InfoLine on 1300 135 030 or visit the Stay on Your Feet WA™ website at: www.iccwa.org.au/iccwafalls.htm
Preventing pressure ulcers

A pressure ulcer is a sore, a break or blister of the skin that is commonly caused by constant unrelieved pressure on an area of the body for a long period. Pressure ulcers can be very painful, take a long time to heal, and may reduce your mobility. When you are already unwell or recovering from surgery, it can seem like a huge task to roll over or change your body position regularly, but when it comes to preventing pressure ulcers, a few simple actions can save a lot of pain.

The following steps should be taken to help prevent getting pressure ulcers.

1. Ensure good posture when sitting in a chair. Avoid sitting in a slumped position. Always sit up straight with your bottom in the back of the chair and with your back resting against the back of the chair.

2. Change your body position frequently if lying in bed for a prolonged time. Unless you are instructed not to, it is recommended that you change your body position at least every 1-2 hours if you are in bed, or every 15 minutes to 1 hour if you are in a chair. If you cannot move easily yourself, ask for assistance.

3. Use special equipment like specialised mattresses and heel elevators, to help relieve the pressure.

4. Inspect your skin for early warning signs of redness that does not go away, broken or blistered skin, localised pain, tingling or numbness. If you cannot see all of your body ask a nurse, a family member or a friend to check regularly for you.

5. Bathe or wash with warm water using a mild cleanser or soap that does not make the skin dry.

6. Use a moisturising lotion to prevent your skin drying out. Avoid vigorous massage or rubbing of the skin, as this can damage the underlying tissue.

7. Keep your skin clean and dry at all times. If you use a continence device to control your bowel or bladder, it is important that you change it regularly to keep the skin clean and dry and to reduce skin irritation from any urine or faeces.

8. Apply a special dressing to the existing pressure area or potential area to protect the site.

If you think you are developing the symptoms of a pressure ulcer, including redness that does not go away, broken or blistered skin, localised pain, tingling or numbness, advise your doctor or nurse immediately.
Who is at risk from pressure ulcers?
Anyone can get pressure ulcers but you are more at risk if you are frail, elderly or have one or more of the following:

- inability to move freely when confined to a bed or chair;
- poor diet or low fluid intake;
- poor control of bladder or bowel;
- diabetes, poor circulation, history of smoking; and/or
- reduced mental awareness - for example due to illness, medications or anaesthetics.

Where do pressure ulcers occur?
Pressure ulcers can occur on any part of the body, but are more likely to occur on the bony parts of the body where there is little padding. See diagrams below:

This information is adapted from policies and guidelines developed by the Australian Wound Management Association (www.awma.com.au) and the Victorian Quality Council (www.health.vic.gov.au/qualitycouncil).
Key points to remember

- Pressure ulcers, also known as ‘bed sores’ or ‘decubitus ulcers’, are breaks or blisters in the skin that can be very painful, take a long time to heal and may reduce your mobility.

- Warning signs include skin redness that does not go away, broken or blistered skin, localised pain, tingling or numbness.

- The depth of skin damage can vary from quite shallow to very deep.

- They commonly result from constant, unrelieved pressure applied to a body area for a long period.

- Other causes include friction, shearing (dragging of the skin when sliding down in bed) and prolonged exposure to moisture.

- On admission to a hospital, a nurse will assess your risk of developing pressure ulcers and will make a plan to reduce the risk. If your condition changes whilst in hospital ask for a re-assessment.

- You can prevent pressure ulcers while in hospital, and after you go home, by changing your body position frequently (at least every 1-2 hours), and by inspecting your skin for early warning signs.

- Do not vigorously massage or rub the skin as this can damage the underlying skin tissue.

- If you have bandages or stockings applied as part of your treatment, notify your nurse or doctor if they appear to be rubbing the skin or cause you discomfort.

More information about pressure ulcers can be obtained by asking hospital staff or your general practitioner. You can also call HealthDirect (24 hour health advice) on 1800 02 222 or visit the Australian Wound Management Association website at: www.awma.com.au
Avoiding infection

When you are unwell or recovering from surgery, the last thing you want is to get an infection which will make you feel worse and delay your recovery. Even when you are well, it is good to avoid catching colds, the flu and other infectious diseases.

Here are some ways you can reduce the risk of suffering an infection.

1. If you are preparing for surgery DO NOT shave the surgical site unless instructed to do so by your surgeon.

2. If you are a smoker, try to quit smoking at least 30 days before you enter hospital, or reduce the number of cigarettes you are smoking. This is particularly important if you are undergoing surgery. Smoking can slow down the healing process.

3. If you have an open wound, be careful to follow instructions from your health practitioner on treatment and care.

4. Avoid close contact with people who have an infectious condition, and ask people not to visit you if they are sick. If you are sick stay away from other patients.

5. Doctors, nurses, dentists and other health care professionals come in contact with lots of viruses and bacteria, and it is essential that they clean their hands properly before they treat you. If you are concerned, ask your health practitioner if they have washed their hands before they touch you.

At home, you can avoid infection by:

6. Cleaning your hands regularly, particularly before touching or eating food, and after you have:
   - used the bathroom;
   - taken out the rubbish;
   - changed a nappy;
   - handled money; or
   - played with a pet.

7. Using warm water and soap, and rub your hands vigorously for at least 15 seconds. Alternatively, you can use an alcohol-based gel to wash your hands. You can buy alcohol-based gel from your local pharmacy.

8. Covering your mouth and nose, using a tissue or handkerchief, when you cough or sneeze, and then cleaning your hands.
Improving your emotional wellbeing

Serious illness or major surgery often leads to emotional and lifestyle adjustments before, during and after recovery. It is a normal human response to feel some degree of emotional disturbance during the time of treatment and recovery.

After major illness or surgery an ordinary human response may include:

- anxiety or fear;
- bewilderment;
- confusion;
- sadness;
- feeling isolated; and
- a lack of self-confidence.

You should not feel embarrassed about having these feelings or having trouble coping with them and you may find it helpful to talk to a friend or family member, your doctor or nurse or contact a patient support group.

It may also help to relieve anxiety if you understand your health condition and assume some control over the management of your health.

As you recuperate, you will have good days and bad days, but sometimes depression can be a complication of your condition or treatment. One of the clear signs of depression is a feeling of having no good days over a period of two weeks.

Ask yourself if, for more than two weeks, you have:

1. felt sad, down or miserable for most of the time?
2. lost interest or pleasure in most of your usual activities (allowing for any ongoing limitation on physical activities)?

If you answer yes to either of these questions you should seek help from your general practitioner or another health care professional.

If possible you could delay making significant life decisions until you are feeling fully recovered.

You can get information about depression from your general practitioner or by calling the Office of Mental Health on (08) 9222 4099 or www.mental.health.wa.gov.au. Additional information is available from the BeyondBlue website: www.beyondblue.org.au or Lifeline’s “Just Ask” information line on 1300 131 114.

If you need urgent psychiatric help, contact your general practitioner or the Office of Mental Health on (08) 9222 4099 or www.mental.health.wa.gov.au for your nearest Mental Health Service. At weekends or after hours, contact the Department of Health’s Psychiatric Emergency Team on 1300 555 788 or in the country (Freecall) 1800 676 822.
Maximising your recovery

An important part of your recovery is ensuring you have everything you need before you leave the hospital. Before you leave hospital, make sure that a discharge summary is completed and that it will be sent to your nominated general practitioner, detailing your diagnosis and treatment. Also ask for a copy of the discharge summary to take away with you. This will help you and your general practitioner manage your ongoing health care.

Checklist before you leave the hospital.

1. Your condition - Do you know enough about your condition, symptoms to watch out for and what to do if they occur?

2. Medications - Have you discussed with your doctor or pharmacist what medications you need to take, what dose to take and how long to take your medications for (e.g. should you finish all of the medicine or only take it until you feel better)? Ask your doctor or pharmacist to complete the written medication record on page 39-42.

3. Special instructions - Are there any special instructions that you need to follow e.g. avoiding bending, or using a shower instead of using a bath tub?

4. Home care - Do you know what help you will require at home e.g. should someone be with you 24 hours per day? If so, has this been arranged?

5. Home equipment - Do you know if you require any special equipment? Is your condition or the medications you are taking likely to increase your risk of falling? If so, what equipment can be installed to minimise the risk?

6. Follow-up care - Do you know what follow-up care you need including physiotherapy, exercise plans or wound management plans?

7. Ongoing medical care - Do you know when you have to see your general practitioner or attend the outpatient clinic? Are there any further tests to be conducted?

You may also access other services like a social worker or occupational therapist, who can give advice or assist you in organising other aspects of your recovery plan. The hospital or your general practitioner can arrange this.

Once you leave hospital, you may want to get further information about your condition to help you maximise your recovery and minimise the likelihood or severity of recurring illness. You can get further information about your condition from your general practitioner or by calling HealthDirect on 1800 022 222. In addition you can visit the HealthInsite website at: www.healthinsite.gov.au or the Cochrane website at: www.cochrane.org
Your health records and privacy

It is important that your health record is available when you require treatment in a hospital, especially in an emergency. Health records also provide important opportunities for health research that can improve health services and the health of the population. These benefits need to be balanced against the risk of collecting and securing personal data.

Every time you visit a doctor or hospital, a paper and an electronic record of your visit will be created. During your treatment, other health professionals may need to see your medical record. For example, if you live in a rural area, your doctor may use Telehealth to view your health information, including radiology images and test results. If you are treated in another public hospital, some information including details of your medical condition and previous treatment may be provided to that hospital in the form of an electronic record. The paper record generally remains with the original treating hospital.

Administrative information about your treatment in a WA hospital is used by the Department of Health to continually improve our services. The Department of Health is also authorised by various Acts and Regulations to collect certain information about you by law, for example:

- if you are diagnosed with cancer;
- if you are treated for a mental illness;
- if you give birth and when you are born;
- if you are diagnosed with a notifiable communicable disease; or
- if you undergo an assisted reproductive procedure.

This information is coded to protect your personal information. To protect your identity only summary information is used in reports published by the Department of Health. Health care professionals and Department of Health staff are legally and ethically obliged to keep your personal information confidential.

Further information can be obtained from the following Department of Health websites:

Accessing your personal health information

The Department of Health supports your right to see what personal information, including health information, is held about you. If you wish to access your health record, a written application (with proof of your identity) must be submitted to the delegated Health Record Decision-Maker at the hospital or community health service you have attended. The contact details for the delegated Health Record Decision-Makers in WA public hospitals is available at: www.health.wa.gov.au/medical_records/

You also have the right to request access to information about you under Freedom of Information (FoI) Act 1992.

You have the right to:

- know what information is held about you;
- access that information (subject to some exceptions);
- request that a note is placed on your record correcting any information that is wrong.

If you would like to apply for access to your health record under the FoI Act, you should forward your application directly to the hospital in which you were treated. If you have difficulty accessing your medical record from the hospital, you can contact the Freedom of Information Co-ordinator at the Department of Health on ph: (08) 9222 4414 or the Information Commissioner on ph: (08) 9220 7888, Freecall 1800 621 244 or web: www.foi.wa.gov.au/

If you need further assistance or information about making an FoI application you can also contact Health Consumers’ Council of WA on ph: (08) 9221 3422 or if you live outside the metropolitan area Freecall 1800 620 780.
Your health information - Reporting to improve quality

How can you participate?

Health care is complex and sometimes things go wrong. You may want to comment or report an incident after the urgent issues have been addressed. It is important to the ongoing quality and safety of health care that problems are reported, analysed and acted upon so that the same problems do not occur with other patients.

When you make a report or comment on the quality of your health care, it is important that this feedback is given to the right people or organisation to be investigated. Make your report to the following organisations if your report or comment relates to:

- **Medications and medical devices**

  The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) is the Australian government authority responsible for regulating therapeutic goods. The TGA has an on-line reporting service for patients and health professionals to report problems at: [www.tga.gov.au](http://www.tga.gov.au) Choose the type of problem that you would like to report and complete the appropriate form. Alternatively, phone 1300 134 237 for problems with medicines or phone 1800 809 361 for problems with devices.

- **Health care professionals**

  Concerns about the conduct of a health professional should be reported to the relevant professional registration board for the health professional involved, i.e. Medical Board of WA for doctors, Nursing Board of WA for nurses, or Physiotherapy Registration Board for physiotherapists.

- **Care, treatment or service in a hospital**

  You can make a comment or complaint directly through any staff member on the ward or through the Complaints Manager at your hospital.

- **Unresolved complaints**

  If you are not satisfied with the way your comment or complaint has been resolved by the hospital, you can make a complaint to the Office of Health Review, which is an independent State Government agency established to deal with complaints about health and disability services. You need to make your complaint within one year of the event occurring. The Office of Health Review can be contacted by phoning: (08) 9323 0600, Freecall: 1800 813 583 (for country residents) or by visiting: [www.healthreview.wa.gov.au](http://www.healthreview.wa.gov.au)

- **Free advice and assistance**

  If you would like free advice or assistance in making a comment, complaint or report you can contact Health Consumers’ Council of WA on ph: (08) 9221 3422, or Freecall 1800 620 780, if you live outside the metropolitan area.
Where can you find more information?

The internet is a good source of health information. However, anyone can publish information on the internet, so you need to make sure that the information you are accessing is reliable. There are some very reliable free health information sites including:

- **WA Department of Health - www.health.wa.gov.au**
  The Department of Health website provides a range of information for health consumers, including information on hospital and community health care services provided in WA.

- **HealthInsite - www.healthinsite.gov.au**
  HealthInsite is an Australian Government initiative, funded by the Department of Health and Ageing. It aims to improve the health of Australians by providing easy access to quality information about human health and a wide range of health conditions.

- **Cochrane Collaboration - www.cochrane.org**
  The Cochrane Collaboration is an international non-profit and independent organisation, dedicated to making up-to-date, accurate information about the effects of health care readily available to health professionals and the public. It produces and disseminates systematic reviews of health care interventions and promotes the search for evidence in the form of clinical trials and other studies of interventions.
Chronic disease support groups

There are a number of non-government patient support organisations that can provide you with information about:

- your condition;
- assistance that is available;
- rehabilitation programs;
- self-management programs;
- peer support;
- secondary prevention;
- health education; and
- other resources.

You can find information about these organisations by:

- asking your doctor or other health professional;
- looking in the phone book;
- phoning the Health Consumers’ Council of WA on ph: (08) 9221 3422, or Freecall 1800 620 780, if you live outside the metropolitan area; and

Health advice

You can access health care advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week by phoning HealthDirect on ph: 1800 022 222 or TTY 1800 022 226 if you are deaf or hearing impaired.
Bibliography

Informed consent


Making the right decisions for you

Understanding your risk


Your rights and responsibilities


Managing your medication safely


Correct patient, correct site, correct Procedure


Preventing falls


Preventing pressure ulcers

Fremantle Hospital and Health Service (2004). *Preventing pressure ulcers: patient information and advice booklet*.


Avoiding infection


Avoiding infection
Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health care Organizations (2005). *Three things you can do to prevent infections*. (www.jointcommission.org/PatientSafety/SpeakUp/)

Improving your emotional wellbeing

Maximising your recovery

Your health information and privacy


Hospitals around the world are under increasing pressure from growing demand and higher costs, and WA is no exception. If we want first class services that are sustainable in the long term we need to use services wisely (a bit like water wise). You will get the best service if you use the right service for your need.

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<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urgent medical assistance</td>
<td>Call <strong>000</strong> immediately</td>
<td>If you need urgent medical assistance don’t delay. If you are having difficulty breathing, seeing or speaking, or have chest pain, numbness or weakness you should call an ambulance or attend a hospital emergency centre immediately. You can obtain medical advice over the phone by calling HealthDirect. Do not wait on the phone if you need urgent care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency departments in hospitals</td>
<td>HealthInfo ph: 1300 135 030 or Department of Health website: <a href="http://www.health.wa.gov.au/services/">www.health.wa.gov.au/services/</a></td>
<td>Not all hospitals have an emergency department. You should get to know which hospitals in your area have an emergency department, so that you can locate them quickly when you need them. For further information, ask your general practitioner, or call HealthInfo or the Department of Health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General practitioner or doctor</td>
<td>Ask your general practitioner what services are available after hours. Information on the location of general practitioners can be found in the Yellow Pages HealthDirect ph: 1800 022 222</td>
<td>Your general practitioner is responsible for managing your day to day health needs. If you have an ongoing or chronic illness, ask your general practitioner to prepare a care plan that sets out what you should do in an emergency or if you suffer specific symptoms. You may need medical care after hours, so ask your general practitioner to recommend a locum service or after hours general practitioner service so you can access these services when you need them. You can also call HealthDirect to get information and contact details for 24 hour or after hoursgeneral practice clinics. [Add your general practitioner’s phone number here]:</td>
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| Metropolitan health services  | Department of Health website: www.health.wa.gov.au/services/ | **North Metropolitan Health Service**

The North Metropolitan Health Service provides public health services at the following hospitals:

- Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital ph: (08) 9346 3333
- Osborne Park Hospital ph: (08) 9346 8000
- Swan/Kalamunda Health Service incorporating:
  - Swan District Hospital Campus ph: (08) 9347 5244
  - Kalamunda District Hospital Campus ph: (08) 9293 2122
- Graylands Selby-Lemnos and Special Care Health Service ph: (08) 9347 6600
- King Edward Memorial Hospital ph: (08) 9340 2222
- Joondalup Health Campus ph: (08) 9400 9400

**South Metropolitan Health Service**

The South Metropolitan Health Service provides public health services at the following hospitals:

- Armadale Hospital ph: (08) 9391 2000
- Bentley Hospital ph: (08) 9334 3600
- Fremantle Hospital and Health Service ph: (08) 9431 3333
- Kaleeeya Hospital ph: (08) 9319 0300
- Rockingham/Kwinana District Hospital ph: (08) 9592 0600
- Royal Perth Hospital ph: (08) 9224 2244
- Murray Hospital ph: (08) 9531 7222
- Peel Health Campus ph: (08) 9531 8000

**Princess Margaret Hospital** ph: (08) 9340 8222

Princess Margaret Hospital provides a range of specialist paediatric health services for the WA Community.
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<th>Service</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Country health services</strong></td>
<td><strong>WA Country Health Service</strong></td>
<td>The WA Country Health Service is the management body responsible for the following country health regions:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ph: (08) 9223 8500 or 1800 629 028 or <a href="http://www.wacountry.health.wa.gov.au">www.wacountry.health.wa.gov.au</a></td>
<td>• Goldfields South East Health Region ph: (08) 9080 5710</td>
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<td>• Great Southern Health Region ph: (08) 9892 2662</td>
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<td>• Kimberley Health Region ph: (08) 9192 5911</td>
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<td>• Midwest Murchison Health Region ph: (08) 9956 2209</td>
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<td>• Pilbara Gascoyne Health Region ph: (08) 9158 1794</td>
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<td>• South West Health Region ph: (08) 9781 2350</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Wheatbelt Health Region ph: (08) 9622 4350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol and drug treatment</td>
<td><strong>Drug and Alcohol Office</strong> ph: (08) 9370 0333 or Web: <a href="http://www.dao.health.wa.gov.au">www.dao.health.wa.gov.au</a></td>
<td>Specialist services are delivered through a network of government and non-government agencies contracted by the Drug and Alcohol Office to help adults, younger people, and their families or carers, with drug and alcohol related problems. A 24-hour, confidential telephone service that provides information, counselling, referral and advice to anyone concerned about their own or another’s alcohol or other drug use.</td>
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<tr>
<td>services</td>
<td><strong>Alcohol and Drug Information Services (ADIS)</strong></td>
<td>ph: 1800 198 024 (Freecall)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aboriginal health services</td>
<td><strong>Office of Aboriginal Health</strong></td>
<td>All State funded hospitals and health services are required to give special attention to the needs of Aboriginal people and ensure services are provided in a culturally appropriate manner. Community controlled Aboriginal health services and other community organisations also provide services that are aimed at improving the health of Aboriginal families.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ph: (08) 9222 4024 or Web: <a href="http://www.aboriginal.health.wa.gov.au">www.aboriginal.health.wa.gov.au</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Aged care services</td>
<td><strong>Home and Community Care (HACC)</strong> ph: (08) 9222 4060 or Web: <a href="http://www.health.wa.gov.au/hacc">www.health.wa.gov.au/hacc</a></td>
<td>Sometimes elderly people who are hospitalised because of a serious illness or injury will be unable to return home and will need to move either temporarily or permanently into an aged care facility. This can be a difficult time for the patient and their family. You can get further information about the transition to aged care from your general practitioner, the WA Department of Health’s Home and Community Care (HACC) Program or the Australian Government’s Department of Health and Ageing Aged Care Assessment Team.</td>
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<td><strong>HealthInfo ph: 1300 135 030</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Department of Health and Ageing Aged Care Assessment Team</strong> ph: 1800 052 222</td>
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<td>Dental health services</td>
<td><strong>Dental Health Services</strong> ph: (08) 9313 0555 or (08) 9325 3452</td>
<td>Dental Health Services provide a number of services and programs throughout WA including: school dental services; subsidised general dental care programs via public dental clinics and private practitioners; general dental services to geographically isolated communities; subsidised dental care through participating private practitioners; provision of oral health services to residents of aged care facilities; and oral health education.</td>
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<td>(after hours emergency service)</td>
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<td>TTY: (08) 9313 2085</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Web: <a href="http://www.dental.wa.gov.au">www.dental.wa.gov.au</a></td>
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<td><strong>Office of Mental Health</strong> ph: (08) 9222 4099 or Web: <a href="http://www.mental.health.wa.gov.au">www.mental.health.wa.gov.au</a></td>
<td>There is a comprehensive range of public mental health services available for children, adolescents, adults and older people. Services are provided through community mental health units, hospitals and community health centres. Information on these services is available from your general practitioner, the Department of Health’s Office of Mental Health or HealthInfo.</td>
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<td><strong>HealthInfo ph: 1300 135 030</strong></td>
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<td>Emergency psychiatric services</td>
<td><strong>Office of Mental Health</strong> ph: (08) 9222 4099 or Web: <a href="http://www.mental.health.wa.gov.au">www.mental.health.wa.gov.au</a></td>
<td>If you need urgent psychiatric help, ask your general practitioner, HealthInfo or the Office of Mental Health ph: (08) 9222 4099 or <a href="http://www.mental.health.wa.gov.au">www.mental.health.wa.gov.au</a> for your nearest Mental Health Service. A confidential after-hours psychiatric emergency assessment &amp; advisory service is provided by the Department of Health’s Psychiatric Emergency Team for mental health clients and their carers.</td>
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<td><strong>Psychiatric Emergency Team</strong> ph: 1300 555 788 or in the country (Freecall) 1800 676 822</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Family, child and community health services</strong></td>
<td>HealthInfo ph: 1300 135 030 Department of Health WA Local Government Association (WALGA) ph: (08) 9321 5055 or Web: <a href="http://www.walga.asn.au">www.walga.asn.au</a></td>
<td>There are many services available in the community including dental care, community health services, school health services, and child development services. You can get information about the services that are available to you by calling the HealthInfo Line. For information about services provided by Local Government, contact your Local Government Authority. They can be found in the White Pages or by contacting the WA Local Government Association.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Palliative care</strong></td>
<td>Palliative Care WA ph: (08) 9212 4330 or Web: <a href="http://www.palliativecarewa.asn.au">www.palliativecarewa.asn.au</a> Cancer Council Western Australia ph: (08) 9212 4333 or Web: <a href="http://www.cancerwa.asn.au">www.cancerwa.asn.au</a> HealthInfo ph: 1300 135 030 Palliative Care Section - Department of Health and Ageing E-mail: <a href="mailto:palliativecare@health.gov.au">palliativecare@health.gov.au</a> Web: <a href="http://www.health.gov.au/palliativecare/">www.health.gov.au/palliativecare/</a></td>
<td>Palliative care is holistic care for people with a terminal illness. It can be provided in hospital, in the community or at home. Further information is available by contacting Palliative Care WA, the Cancer Council Western Australia, HealthInfo or the Palliative Care Section of the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.</td>
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<td><strong>Public health and population health services</strong></td>
<td>Department of Health Web: <a href="http://www.health.wa.gov.au/services/">www.health.wa.gov.au/services/</a> Department of Local Government and Regional Development Ph: (08) 9217 1500 or 1800 620 511 (country) or Web: <a href="http://www.dlgrd.wa.gov.au">www.dlgrd.wa.gov.au</a> Local Government Authorities can be found in the White Pages WA Local Government Association (WALGA) ph: (08) 9321 5055 or Web: <a href="http://www.walga.asn.au">www.walga.asn.au</a></td>
<td>There are many public and environmental health services provided by the Department of Health and its agencies, including: infectious and communicable disease monitoring and treatment; immunisation; injury prevention; hereditary diseases; radiation health; drug and poison control; and pesticide safety. Various public and environmental health services are also provided by environmental health officers employed by local government to prevent the occurrence and spread of disease.</td>
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<td><strong>Non-government &amp; not for profit organisations</strong></td>
<td>Department of Health Web: <a href="http://www.health.wa.gov.au">www.health.wa.gov.au</a> Department of Community Development ph: (08) 9222 2555 or web: <a href="http://www.community.wa.gov.au">www.community.wa.gov.au</a> Health Consumers’ Council of WA ph: (08) 9221 3422 or freecall 1800 620 780 if you are outside the metropolitan area. Western Institute of Self Help ph: (08) 9228 4488 or freecall: 1800 195 575 or Web: <a href="http://www.wish.org.au">www.wish.org.au</a></td>
<td>There are many non-government organisations that provide assistance to people with specific conditions i.e. diabetes, cystic fibrosis, motor neurone disease, heart disease, Alzheimer’s disease. Further information about non-government and not for profit community groups can be obtained from your hospital, general practitioner, the Department of Health, Department of Community Development, Department of Disability Services or the Health Consumers’ Council of WA. Information may also be obtained by contacting organisations such as the Western Institute of Self Help (WISH). WISH is a not-for-profit, community-based organisation that provides support and assistance for individuals and self help support groups with start-up, ongoing development, advocacy and networking. WISH aims to help people and self help and support groups by providing links to community networks and information, assistance with group development and management, and support with community resources and services.</td>
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<td><strong>Waiting lists</strong></td>
<td><strong>Central Waitlist Bureau</strong> 1800 654 807</td>
<td>Patients requiring elective surgery (non-life threatening) at a public hospital are often placed on waiting lists for some operations. The Central Wait List Bureau may be able to reduce the waiting time by checking which hospitals and specialists can perform the procedure soonest. The Central Wait List Bureau can be contacted on Freecall 1800 654 807</td>
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<td><strong>Patient Transport</strong></td>
<td><strong>TransPerth</strong></td>
<td>Public Transport</td>
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<td>Call the InfoLine on: 13 62 13 web: <a href="http://www.transperth.wa.gov.au">www.transperth.wa.gov.au</a></td>
<td>TransPerth operates a range of bus and train services around the Perth Metropolitan area. Details of bus routes and timetables can be obtained from the TransPerth InfoLine on 13 62 13 or from the TransPerth website at: <a href="http://www.transperth.wa.gov.au">www.transperth.wa.gov.au</a></td>
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<td>Swan Taxis 13 13 30</td>
<td>Taxis services operate in the Perth metropolitan area 24-hours per day, seven days per week. In addition to four-seater taxis, a fleet of multi-purpose taxis are also available for people with disabilities. Please call 13 62 94 to make a booking.</td>
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<td>Black and White Taxis 13 10 08</td>
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<td>Coastal Taxis 13 22 27</td>
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<td><strong>St John Ambulance</strong></td>
<td>ph: (08) 9334 1234</td>
<td>Hospital Voluntary Transport Programs</td>
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<td>Emergencies 000</td>
<td>In additional to taxi services and public transport services provided by Transperth, a range of voluntary Patient Assisted Transport services are provided by WA hospitals and non-government organisations. Please ask your general practitioner or hospital staff whether a voluntary Patient Transport Service is available at your hospital from either the hospital or non-government organisations.</td>
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<td>Call PATS on 1300 135 030 or <a href="http://www.wacountry.health.wa.gov.au">www.wacountry.health.wa.gov.au</a></td>
<td>St John Ambulance provides a Patient Transport Service for non-emergency cases. To book a Patient Transfer Vehicle please contact St John Ambulance on (08) 9334 1234 (non-emergency number). It is essential that authorisation is obtained from a medical practitioner and that bookings are made 24 hours in advance of when the patient requires the transportation. For emergency transportation to hospital call 000.</td>
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<td><strong>Disability Services</strong></td>
<td><strong>Disability Services Commission</strong> ph: (08) 9426 9200 or 1800 998 214 (Freecall) or (08) 9223 1111 (after hours crisis care) TTY: (08) 9426 9315 E-mail: <a href="mailto:dsc@dsc.wa.gov.au">dsc@dsc.wa.gov.au</a> Web: <a href="http://www.dsc.wa.gov.au">www.dsc.wa.gov.au</a></td>
<td>Patient Assisted Travel Scheme (PATS)</td>
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<td>Travel assistance is available to people who need to travel more than 100 kilometres (one way) to access the nearest available specialist service. It is designed to assist country residents to access the full range of essential medical services. The type of assistance offered includes travel and accommodation allowance and financial assistance for an escort or attendant if needed to accompany the patient. Applications for assistance must be completed by a medical practitioner and lodged before departure at the nearest country public hospital. To find out more information about PATS and your eligibility and entitlements, contact your general practitioner or PATS on 1300 135 030 or go to <a href="http://www.wacountry.health.wa.gov.au">www.wacountry.health.wa.gov.au</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Notes</strong></td>
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<td>A wide range of services is available to help people with physical and intellectual disabilities enjoy the same rights and opportunities as other community members, regardless of the nature of their disability. The Disability Services Commission is the State government agency responsible for policy, program development and service planning in all areas that affect the rights and needs of Western Australians with disabilities. Disability services are provided by the Disability Services Commission or by non-government agencies funded by the Commission. Further information about services that are available in your area are available from the Disability Services Commission at: <a href="http://www.dsc.wa.gov.au">www.dsc.wa.gov.au</a></td>
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Patient Medication Record Form

Patient Name: _____________________________________________________________

I should review my medications on: __________________________________________

When you visit your general practitioner, pharmacist or go into hospital, always take this Patient Medication Record Form with you. If you are scheduled to go into hospital, take all of your medications with you (unless the hospital asks you not to). This will help your doctor and other health practitioners to provide you with the correct medications and enable them to update your medications, if it is required.

Always write down the medications that you are taking so that in an emergency health care staff can access the information quickly. The National Prescribing Service recommends that you list all medication you are currently taking including any that:

- you take on prescription;
- have been recommended by your pharmacist;
- you have received whilst in hospital; and/or
- you have purchased over-the-counter.

Ask your general practitioner or pharmacist about your medication and for information that you can take home and read in your own time. You can also obtain information by phoning the National Prescribing Service Medicines Line on 1300 888 763 (Monday to Friday 9.00 am to 6.00 pm (EST)) or by visiting the ‘Consumers’ page of the National Prescribing Service website at:

www.nps.org.au/consumers
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medication</th>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>What was it for prescribed for?</th>
<th>How much do I use?</th>
<th>Date started</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: paracetamol</td>
<td>500mg tablets</td>
<td>Arthritis pain in knee</td>
<td>2 tablets, 4 times/day</td>
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</table>

Table adapted from the National Prescribing Service’s Medimate Brochure (www.nps.org.au)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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Acknowledgements

Patient First project: Prepared and co-ordinated by Ms Karen Carey, Consultant

Under the sponsorship of: WA Council for Safety and Quality in Health Care
Office of Safety and Quality in Health Care, Department of Health
Health Consumers’ Council of Western Australia

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Disclaimer

The ‘Patient First’ program provides health information on a range of clinical issues for the benefit of the public. The ‘Patient First’ program has been developed by the WA Council for Safety and Quality in Health Care and the Department of Health as an information source only. The clinical information contained in the ‘Patient First’ resources is not comprehensive, nor is it intended to be used to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease nor should it be used for therapeutic purposes or as a substitute for your own health practitioner’s advice. Before acting or relying on any of the information contained in the ‘Patient First’ resources, you should ask your health practitioner for appropriate information and advice about managing your illness or condition.

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If you require urgent medical assistance you can contact your general practitioner or contact HealthDirect on 1800 022 222. However, if you need urgent treatment, call an ambulance or attend a hospital emergency centre immediately.