

# Consumer Fact Sheet

## **Patients Improving Safety**

Often the result of a series of minor failures, medical errors can be avoided by patients who become involved and informed about their treatment. Improving patient safety requires continuous learning and communication of information between caregivers and patients. We all have a role in patient safety and, with sensitivity and cooperation, everyone will benefit from its successes.

**What role can patients play** to make sure they have a safer medical experience? We at Loudoun Hospital Center recommend the following:

### **Become a more informed health care consumer:**

- Seek information about your illness or condition.
- Research treatment recommendations.
- Choose a physician/hospital experienced in the type of care you require.
- Ask questions of your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, and benefits plan coordinator.

### **Keep track of your history**

- Write down your medical history including: illnesses, immunizations, allergies, hospitalizations, all medications and dietary supplements you're taking, and any reactions or sensitivities.
- Record contact information for doctors, clinics, and pharmacies for quick reference.

### **Work with your doctor and other health care professionals as a team**

- Share your health history with your care team.
- Share updated treatment information.
- Make sure you understand the care and treatment you'll be receiving. Ask questions if you're not clear on your care.
- Pay attention. If something doesn't seem right, call it to the attention of your doctor.
- Explore any concerns about your health or treatment with your health care team.

### **Involve a relative or friend in your care**

- If you're not able to observe or participate fully in your care, ask a family member or friend to assist. They can accompany you on appointments or stay with you, help you ask questions, understand care instructions and discuss options.

### **Follow your doctor's directions**

- Be sure you receive all instructions in writing and that you read and understand them. Also, have information explained verbally so you may ask questions.
- Take medications exactly as prescribed.
- Use home medical equipment and supplies only as instructed.
- Report anything unusual to your doctor immediately.

Together, we *can* make injury or illness treatment safe and effective for all!