

Help us to improve patient safety.

If you have any suggestions to improve patient safety in our facilities, please contact Ben Pitts, risk/legal director, by phone at 770-812-8935 or email him at bpitts@tanner.org.

Patients and families are encouraged to report patient safety concerns to the risk/legal director. If concerns cannot be resolved at this level, you may contact The Joint Commission at:

Office of Quality and Patient Safety
The Joint Commission
One Renaissance Boulevard
Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181
Website: www.jointcommission.org

Use the "Report a Patient Safety Event" link in the "Action Center" on the home page.

Fax: 630-792-5636

What you should know about patient safety

The more healthcare information you have, the better you are at preventing errors and taking care of yourself. You need to ask your pharmacists, doctors and nurses about your illnesses, and you should expect answers.

Find out all you can about your illness and the medications you are taking. What you learn will help protect you later. Your doctors, nurses and pharmacists work hard to keep you healthy, but you are also responsible. Learn what questions to ask. Listed in this brochure are some excellent guidelines for you to follow when taking medications, visiting a doctor or if hospitalized.



Patient Safety at Tanner

What You Should Know About Patient Safety



705 Dixie Street
Carrollton, GA 30117
770-812-9666

tanner.org



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Medical errors are one of the nation's leading causes of death and injury. A report by the Institute of Medicine estimates that as many as 44,000 to 98,000 people die in U.S. hospitals each year as the result of medical errors. This means more people die from medical errors than from motor vehicle accidents, breast cancer or AIDS.

Government agencies, purchasers of group healthcare, and healthcare providers are working together to make the U.S. healthcare system safer for patients and the public.

What are medical errors?

Medical errors happen when something that was planned as part of medical care doesn't work out. Errors can also include medicines, surgery, diagnosis, equipment or lab reports. Medical errors can occur anywhere in the healthcare system:

- Hospitals
- Clinics
- Outpatient surgery centers
- Doctors' offices
- Nursing homes
- Pharmacies
- Patients' homes

They can happen during even the most routine tasks, such as when a hospital patient on a salt-free diet is given a high-salt meal. Most errors result from problems created by today's complex healthcare system. But errors also happen when doctors and their patients have problems communicating. For example, a recent study supported by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) found that doctors often do not do enough to help their patients make informed decisions. Uninvolved and uninformed patients are less likely to accept the doctor's choice of treatment and less likely to do what they need to do to make the treatment work.

What are we doing to protect you?

Tanner Health System is working hard to improve patient safety and quality of care provided to our patients. We're committed to creating a culture of safety that encourages the prevention and reporting of errors to improve care. We are constantly involved in activities to facilitate communication with patients and families when problems occur.

Some of the innovative methods that Tanner Health System has implemented include:

- Computer technology is used to make sure that a physician's orders are not mistaken or misinterpreted due to illegible handwriting.
- Nursing units use Pyxis machines to dispense medication. These computerized machines supply medication in prescribed doses to decrease the chance of medication error.
- Special identification is used to alert staff about a patient's special needs, fall risks, allergies to medications or other treatment products to prevent harmful reactions.
- To prevent doctors from operating on the wrong part of the body, patients are asked to identify the site of surgery and participate in the marking of the correct site.

What can you do?

Be involved in your healthcare. That means taking part in every decision about your care.

- Make sure that all your doctors and nurses know about everything you are taking. This includes prescription and over-the-counter medicines and dietary supplements such as vitamins and herbs. At least once a year, bring all of your medicines and supplements with you to your doctor. Your doctor will be able to keep your records up to date.

- Make sure your doctors and nurses know about any allergies and adverse reactions you have had to medicines.
- When your doctor writes you a prescription, make sure you can read it. If you can't read your doctor's handwriting, your pharmacist also might not be able to.
- Ask for information about your medicines in terms you can understand – both when your medicines are prescribed and when you receive them.
- When you pick up your medicine from the pharmacy, ask, "Is this the medicine that my doctor prescribed?"
- If you have questions about the directions on your medicine labels, ask.
- Ask your pharmacist for the best device to measure your liquid medicine. Also, ask questions if you're not sure how to use it.
- Ask for written information about the side effects your medicine could cause. A study found that written information about medicines can help patients recognize problem side effects. Also, give that information to your doctor or pharmacist. If you have a choice, choose a hospital where many patients have the procedure or surgery you need.
- When being discharged, ask your doctor or nurse to explain the treatment plan you will use at home.
- If you are having surgery, make sure that you, your doctor and your surgeon all agree and are clear on exactly what will be done.

Other steps to take

- Ask a family member or friend to be there with you and to be your advocate and support person (someone who can help get things done and speak up for you if you can't).
- Know that "more" is not always better. It is a good idea to find out why a test or treatment is needed and how it can help you.
- Since you are part of your healthcare team, do not be afraid to remind doctors and nurses about washing their hands before working with you.
- If you have a test, don't assume that no news is good news. Ask about the results.
- Learn about your condition and treatments by asking your doctor and nurse and by using other reliable sources.
- Please let us know your preferred language for discussing health care and if you need any assistive devices.