

# Important Patient Safety Tips

Provided by Howard County General Hospital

## At the doctor's office

- Before you visit the doctor, write down your medical history and any concerns you have about your health.
- Make a list of all of the medications you are taking including prescriptions, vitamin supplements, and over-the-counter pills.
- Read all medical forms and make sure that you understand everything that you sign.
- While you are talking to the doctor, take notes.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions about anything that you don't understand.
- Take a family member or friend to your doctor's appointments. It helps to have another set of ears to listen to the information doctors give you.
- Get the results of any tests that you have done. Don't assume that no news is good news.
- Ask for handouts and other written material and do your own research. Libraries, Web sites, and support groups are good sources of information about medical issues.

## In the hospital

- Visit the hospital's Web site to learn what you need to know before you are admitted.
- Pay attention to the care that you receive in the hospital.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions.
- Make sure health care providers confirm your identity by looking at your identification bracelet and chart.
- Don't be afraid to ask a health care provider to wash their hands or wear gloves.
- If you are having surgery, ask questions to make sure you are clear on exactly what will happen during the surgery, how long it will take, and what will happen afterwards.
- When you are discharged, ask your doctor to explain your future treatment plan and what effects you can expect.

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### **Medication safety**

- Know the names, dosages, and potential side effects of every Medication you are taking.
- When you receive a prescription, tell your doctor if you have any allergies and discuss all other medications you are taking.
- Make sure you can read the doctor's handwriting on the written prescription.
- If you have questions about the directions on medicine labels, ask your doctor or pharmacist.