

# PARTNERING FOR SAFETY

## STAYING SAFE IN HOSPITAL



## TOP TIPS FOR SAFE HEALTH CARE

What you need to know for yourself, your family, or someone you care for.

- **Ask questions.** You have the right to ask questions about your care.
- **Find good information.** Ask your healthcare team for guidance.
- **Understand the risks and benefits.** Find out about your tests and treatments before they happen.
- **List all your medicines.** Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you need more information about your medications.
- **Confirm details of your operation.** Ask who will be doing your procedure and what you should expect.
- **Ask about your care after leaving hospital.** Ask for a written outline of your treatment and what should happen after you get home.
- **Know your rights.** You have a number of rights as a patient (please see “Healthcare Rights” section).
- **Understand privacy.** Your medical information is confidential. You can ask to see your medical record.
- **Give feedback.** Feedback helps health professionals spot when improvements can be made.

For more information, go to: [www.safetyandquality.gov.au/toptips](http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/toptips)



## WELCOME TO ST VINCENT'S HOSPITAL

Your safety is our priority. Our goal is to provide our patients with the safest possible care. Health care in Australia is among the best and safest in the world, but there are still risks when spending time in hospital. Find out how we keep you safe during your hospital stay, and what you and your family can do to help. Please speak up if you have questions or concerns, or if you've noticed an unexpected change in your condition. We want to make sure that you and your family feel welcome, valued, and safe throughout your stay.

It is our pleasure to care for you.

Warm regards,

**A/Professor Anthony M. Schembri AM**

Chief Executive Officer

St Vincent's Health Network Sydney

## INTERPRETER SERVICES

Professional interpreters are available if you need help understanding or speaking English. Interpreter Services are free and confidential. If you need to use an interpreter, please call the **Translating and Interpreter Service on 131 450**.

## ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PATIENTS

St Vincent's recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the traditional custodians of our lands. We want all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and their families to feel safe, respected, and welcome in our hospital. St Vincent's has Aboriginal Health Workers to support Aboriginal patients, families, and carers whilst in our hospital. You can speak with Aboriginal Health staff by phoning **(02) 8382 3036**.

## PRIVACY

We will keep your personal information safe by following privacy laws. To help us to look after you, your personal health information will be shared with staff involved in your care. For more information on how we collect, use or disclose your personal information, please go to:

**<http://www.svhs.org.au/privacy-policy>**.

## KEEPING YOUR BELONGINGS SAFE

St Vincent's Hospital does not take responsibility for personal belongings. To help prevent losing anything, please leave your valuables at home or have someone take them home for you.

## CONNECTING TO HOSPITAL INTERNET (WI-FI)

- Select **MA\_Ministries** and click on **Connect**
- Select Patient Wi-Fi Access, and enter your username and password

**Username:** Your patient ID number

**Password:** Your Date of Birth reversed - yymmdd

## MY HEALTHCARE RIGHTS

These rights apply to all people in all places where health care is provided in Australia. The Charter describes what you, or someone you care for, can expect when receiving health care.

I have a right to:

- **Access:** Healthcare services and treatment that meets my needs.
- **Safety:** Receive safe and high quality health care that meets national standards. Be cared for in an environment that is safe and makes me feel safe.
- **Respect:** Be treated as an individual, and with dignity and respect. Have my culture, identity, beliefs and choices recognised and respected.
- **Partnership:** Ask questions and be involved in open and honest communication. Make decisions with my healthcare provider, to the extent that I choose and am able to. Include the people that I want in planning and decision-making.
- **Information:** Clear information about my condition, the possible benefits and risks of different tests and treatments, so I can give my informed consent. Receive information about services, waiting times and costs. Be given assistance, when I need it, to help me to understand and use health information. Access my health information. Be told if something has gone wrong during my health care, how it happened, how it may affect me and what is being done to make care safe.
- **Privacy:** Have my personal privacy respected. Have information about me and my health kept secure and confidential.
- **Give feedback:** Provide feedback or make a complaint without it affecting the way that I am treated. Have my concerns addressed in a transparent and timely way. Share my experience and participate to improve the quality of care and health services.



## RESOLVING YOUR CONCERNS

Your concerns are important to us, so please speak up. We want you to feel welcome, valued, and safe. If you have any concerns, please follow this three-step issue resolution process. This will help to escalate your concerns until they are resolved.

- Talk to your Nurse about your concerns or questions.
- If you are still not satisfied, ask to speak with the Nursing Unit Manager (NUM) and/or Team Leader of the ward.
- If you remain unsatisfied, you can contact the hospital's Consumer Feedback Manager via Phone (02) 8382 2663.

### Making a Formal Complaint

- If you have attempted to resolve your concerns using this process and you are still unsatisfied, you may make a "formal complaint".
- Scan this QR code, or visit our website: <https://www.svhs.org.au/patients-visitors/feedback>



SCAN ME

## PLANNING AHEAD (ADVANCE CARE PLANNING)

A time may come when you are not well enough to look after yourself or speak for yourself. It can help to know that someone, like a family member, friend or carer can help you with your practical and personal needs. If a time comes when you cannot speak for yourself, having appointed someone who you trust to speak for you and having made an advance care plan can make sure that your wishes are met. For more information, go to:

<https://www.svhs.org.au/patients-visitors/being-involved-in-your-care/planning-for-the-future>

## PREPARING FOR SURGERY

You may be asked to come to the hospital on the day of your surgery. The hospital will call you the day before your surgery, telling you what time to arrive, where to go, and any other instructions. For more information, go to <https://www.svhs.org.au/patients-visitors/your-hospital-stay>

## MANAGING YOUR PAIN

We want to make you comfortable during your stay, and keep your pain levels to a minimum. To help us understand we may ask you to rate your pain out of 10, with zero being no pain and 10 being the worst pain ever. This is called your "Pain Score". We will ask for your Pain Score while you are resting, and also after moving or coughing, which helps us to understand what makes your pain worse, and how much it increases when you move or cough. Tell us where your pain is (location), and how it feels (e.g. "aching", "burning", "dull" or "sharp" pain).

- Your pain may be treated in several ways, depending on the type of pain, the cause, and the location.
- Make sure that you ask for pain relief before the pain becomes too strong, or before doing things (such as showering and physiotherapy).
- Your pain can be helped with regular low-dose pain relief, such as paracetamol, which can stop you from needing stronger pain relief, which may have more side effects. Remember to tell your nurse or doctor about any pain that does not get better, even if this is after having pain medicine. If you have any questions about managing pain, ask your nurse or doctor.
- Short-term use of pain medications is not addictive if taken as directed. However, all medications may have side effects, so you must tell the medical staff if you feel sick or very sleepy after taking pain medication.

## ARE YOU WORRIED? (R.E.A.C.H. PROGRAM)

If you or your family are worried about your medical condition, you can escalate your concerns by using the R.E.A.C.H. process.

R.E.A.C.H. stands for Recognise, Engage, Act, Call, and Help is on its way. If you are worried (RECOGNISE), tell the doctor or nurse and ask for a “clinical review” (ENGAGE and ACT). If you are still concerned,

CALL **(02) 8382 3666** and speak with our R.E.A.C.H. staff. HELP will be on its way. You will be reviewed by an independent medical team within 30 minutes.



## PREVENTING INFECTIONS

A range of best practice strategies are used to reduce the risk of infection. Our staff are trained in these strategies and will work with you in a partnership to minimise the risk of a health care acquired infection.

### What you can do to help:

- Practice good hand hygiene. Wash your hands with soap and water before eating, and after toileting. If you are unable to get out of bed, then the nursing staff can help you.
- Use the alcohol hand rub, which is available in each room;
- Encourage your visitors to use the hand sanitiser on arrival to and departure from your room;
- All healthcare workers should clean their hands before and after they touch you. If you are unsure if a staff member has cleaned their hands, it is ok to ask them;
- Avoid touching or adjusting any devices, like your IV drips, drains or catheters. Let staff know if the dressing becomes loose or soiled, or if any insertion site becomes painful.

## VISITORS

We understand that visitors are a great comfort and support during your stay. We request that all visitors:

- Only come to the hospital if they are well (to prevent the spread of infection).
- Visitors should not touch any dressing, devices or equipment. If they have any questions or concerns then they can speak with your Nurse;
- We may need to adjust our hospital visitor arrangements in relation to community infection. Our hospital will display clear signs at the hospital entrance, and your health care team will advise and explain to you the reason for any change in hospital visitation policy;
- For the latest information about visitor times and restrictions, please see our website: [svhs.org.au](http://svhs.org.au)

## PREVENTING FALLS

If you fall in hospital, it can lead to injury, resulting in a longer stay. Most people fall near the bed and while getting to the toilet. There are various causes for falling in hospital, including: being unwell and in an unfamiliar place, poor mobility and balance (unsafe when walking), badly fitting footwear and clothing, urgent need to go to the toilet, and medications that cause drowsiness/dizziness.

### What you can do to help:

- **Use your call bell.** Keep it in easy reach, and ring early if you require assistance. Please wait for staff to assist you.
- **Familiarise yourself with your room and bathroom.** Be aware of any hazards (e.g. spills and clutter) and advise staff when you see them.
- **Take your time when getting up from sitting or lying down.** Let staff know if you feel unwell or unsteady on your feet. Use stable objects for support.
- **Sit down to shower.** Use the rails to get off the chair or the toilet. If you feel unsafe in the bathroom, remain seated, use the call bell and wait for assistance.
- **Use your walking aid.** Always use your own walking aid and keep it within reach.
- **Wear safe footwear.** Wear supportive shoes, slippers or non-slip socks that fit you well – no scuffs or thongs. Do not walk in socks or surgical stockings without non-slip soles.
- **Wear your glasses.** Keep glasses clean and within easy reach.
- **Do not walk around in the dark.** At night, use the light button on the call bell to turn on the light before getting out of bed. Turn the light on in the bathroom.



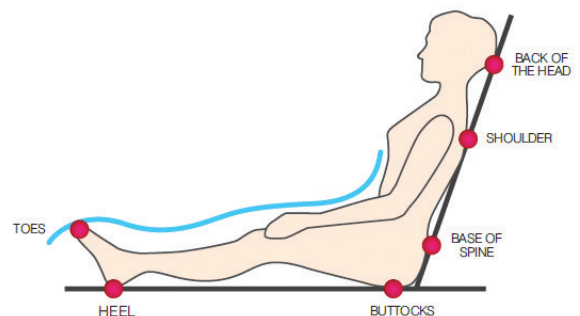
Source: Clinical Excellence Commission©2012 Version 1, SHPN: (CEC) 120263

## PREVENTING PRESSURE INJURIES

A pressure injury, also referred to as a pressure ulcer or bed sore, is an injury to the skin caused by unrelieved pressure and may happen when you are unable to move due to illness, injury, or surgery. Pressure injuries can happen quickly, from lying or sitting in the same position for too long. They can be painful, take a long time to heal, and may lead to other complications. Staff will assess your level of risk of developing a pressure injury, and may provide pressure-relieving equipment (like mattresses).

### What you can do to help:

- **Check your skin for signs of a pressure injury.**  
Let staff know if you are experiencing any warning signs, including: redness/skin discoloration; tenderness, pain, or itching in affected areas; blistering, and/or broken skin.
- **Change your position frequently.** If you are unable to move yourself, staff will help you change your position frequently.
- **Ask for help if you have a weak bladder or bowel, and** if your clothes or bedding are damp.
- **Keep your skin clean and dry,** use a 'skin-friendly' cleanser and moisturiser if appropriate.
- **Drink fluids regularly,** unless you are on a fluid restriction. You may be offered nutritional supplements if you are underweight, have recently lost weight, or have been eating poorly.



Source: Pressure Injury Prevention: Information for Patients and Families Released March 2014, © Clinical Excellence Commission 2014. SHPN (CEC) 130169

## DELIRIUM

### What is delirium?

Delirium is a common medical problem that is characterised by changes in mental function. This includes confusion, changes in emotions (feeling fearful, upset, irritable, or sad), experience hallucinations, and act differently from their usual self. Delirium is often associated with an underlying physical illness or infection. Delirium and its symptoms develops over a short period of time, within hours or days. It usually only lasts for a few days but may persist for longer periods. Delirium occurs more often among older people, but it can occur at any age. In many cases delirium can be prevented. Treatment of delirium relies on finding and treating the underlying causes.

### How is delirium treated?

Staff will do a thorough medical assessment to look for and treat the underlying cause of the delirium. If a physical problem is identified, appropriate treatment will be given (for instance, antibiotics to treat a urinary tract infection). Treatment is sometimes aimed at lessening symptoms and reducing the risk of complications.

### Role of family and carers

It is reassuring for someone with delirium to see familiar people. Family and carers are encouraged to stay with their loved one. **Please notify staff of any sudden change in a person's mental or physical condition.**

### What family members/carers can do to help:

- **Speak slowly in a clear voice.** Identify both yourself and the person by name.
- Encourage and assist the person to have adequate food and fluids.
- **Help to orientate the person.** Remind the person of the location, date and time. Open the curtains in their room during the day. Knowing the time of day can reduce confusion.
- **Provide glasses or hearing aids.** If the person usually wears glasses or hearing aids, help to put them on and ensure they are working. Visual or hearing impairment can make confusion worse.
- **Avoid getting into an argument.** If the person is agitated or aggressive, do not try to restrain them. If they want to walk around, let them, but try to make sure that they are safe from falling and that the area is free from hazards.
- **Bring items that help remind the person of home,** such as photos, a dressing gown, a radio or player with favourite music.
- **Tell staff about any personal information that may help calm and orient the person,** such as the names of family and friends, hobbies, significant events, etc.



Source: This has been produced as part of the Care of Confused Hospitalised Older Persons Program and funded through the NHMRC Cognitive Decline Partnership Centre, 2018. 2HAC108 March 2020 0061 03/20



## OUR VALUES

COMPASSION | JUSTICE | INTEGRITY | EXCELLENCE



For more information about your hospital stay, go to [svhs.org.au](http://svhs.org.au)



To support St Vincent's, go to [supportstvincents.com.au](http://supportstvincents.com.au)



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