

The Medical Minute: Working with your health care team

March 9 2012, By Rebecca J. Densmore

Patient Safety Awareness Week (March 4-10) is an annual National Patient Safety Foundation (NPSF) led education and awareness campaign for health care safety. Penn State Hershey Medical Center participation focuses around raising awareness of patient safety activities and creating awareness among providers, patients and members of the community.

This year's campaign "Be Aware for Safe Care," reflects the need to involve everyone – from patients to providers – in ensuring the safety of the health care process. As part of this year's campaign, the Medical Center is promoting the importance of everyone participating in proper hand hygiene techniques.

Tips for proper hand cleansing:

Hand Sanitizer

- Apply a sufficient quantity to moisten all surfaces of both hands.
- Rub hands together, coating all surfaces including the backs of hands, wrists, between fingers, and under fingernails.
- Rub briskly until dry.

Handwashing

- Wet hands and forearms and apply a sufficient quantity of soap to produce lather.

- Vigorously lather front and back of hands, between fingers, and over wrists for at least 15 seconds (equivalent to singing “Happy Birthday.”)
- Remove all soap residue by rinsing well under running water, and dry hands thoroughly with a paper towel.

Additional recommendations to make your health care experience safer include:

- Become a more informed health care consumer. Research illnesses and conditions that affect you, including different options and treatment plans. This research will help you choose a doctor, pharmacy or hospital experienced with your condition and able to provide the correct type of care. It is important to ask questions of your care staff for clarification of your condition, treatment plans or anything that comes across as confusing.

- Keep track of your history. It is important to keep a list of your medical history, which should include any medical conditions, illnesses, hospitalizations, immunizations, all medications and dietary supplements you currently take and whether you have had any reactions or sensitivities to medications in the past. A reference list of the names and numbers of your doctors, clinics and pharmacies is also recommended.

- Work with your doctor and other [health care](#) professionals as a team. Working as a team is essential to make sure you receive the proper care. Make sure you share your up-to-date health history with the team and everyone who participates in your treatment plan. If you don’t understand what is happening as part of your treatment, make sure you ask questions. If something doesn’t seem right to you, discuss your concerns with your doctor or another member of your treatment team.

- Involve a family member or friend in your care. Family members or friends can accompany you to appointments, ask questions and help you

understand your care if you are not able to fully participate or observe the care you will be receiving.

-- Follow the treatment plan. Once you and your doctor have agreed on a treatment plan, make sure you have all of the instructions verbally and in writing so that you can understand them and refer to them later. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Make sure you take medications as prescribed. As noted above, it is important to let your doctor know if something changes or is unusual with your care.

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

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