Patient & Family Guide
2026

# Talking About Patient Safety Incidents

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FF85-1712

nova scotia health

www.nshealth.ca

# Talking About Patient Safety Incidents

## What is a patient safety incident?



- People expect safe health care. Health care providers work hard every day to give safe care.
- Even though we do our best to try to keep patients safe, there are risks to being in the hospital. For example, a patient may:
  - Fall
  - Get an infection or a pressure injury (bedsore)
  - Be given the wrong dose (amount) of medication. For example, communication errors, or a miscommunication about your health
- These events are called **patient safety incidents**. A patient safety incident is a preventable event or a circumstance which could have resulted or did result in unnecessary harm to a patient.
- Most patient safety incidents do not cause any harm, or they are found and fixed before they affect a patient.

- Nova Scotia Health is committed to:
  - Helping you recover if you are harmed during your care.
  - Learning from this incident to improve the safety and quality of the care we give.

## What if I see a patient safety incident?

- You are an active member of your health care team and can help us keep you safe. **If you have seen or experienced a patient safety incident, please share with a team member or a manager of the care area, when you are able**.

## How are patient safety incidents reported?

- We follow the **Nova Scotia Health Disclosure Policy and Procedure**:
  - https://library.nshealth.ca/Policy-AD-QR-010

Scan the QR code on your smartphone (open the camera on your smartphone, point the camera at the code, and tap the banner or border that appears)

- We use an electronic system called **SIMS (Safety Improvement and Management System)** to report and follow up on patient safety incidents.
- Once a team member reports an incident in SIMS, we can follow up and learn from the incident. This helps us improve the safety and quality of the care we give.

## What is disclosure?



- If a patient safety incident happens to you, you have the right to know:
  - What happened
  - Why it happened
  - What it means for you and your care
  - What will be done to make care safer and to stop it from happening again (called system factors)
- This information is called **disclosure**.
- Through disclosure, we will tell you:
  - What we have learned
  - What will be changed and improved to keep that kind of incident from happening again

**How does disclosure take place?**



- Disclosure starts when a patient safety incident is found. We will:
  - Talk to you and your support persons about what happened as soon as we can.
  - Apologize for what happened.
  - Talk about the next steps in your care plan.
  - Give you a chance to ask questions and answer them openly and honestly.
  - Ask you how we can improve and make future care safer.
  - Ask you what follow-up you would like, and who you would like to have with you during future conversations.

**Who will talk to me?**

- A health care provider, a health care team member, and/or a leadership team member (like a manager) who:
  - You are comfortable talking to.
  - Knows what happened.

### How will disclosure help me?

- Disclosure is meant to:
  - Help you understand how the incident will affect you and your care.
  - Support you and your support persons.
  - Rebuild trust.

## What are my rights after a patient safety incident?

- You have the right to be treated with respect, compassion, and dignity.
- You have the right to ask for a 2nd opinion about your care from another health care provider.
- You have the right to ask for another health care provider to care for you.
- You have the right to give formal feedback (see contact information on pages 7 and 8).

## Telling patients and support persons about patient safety incidents

### When a patient safety incident happens



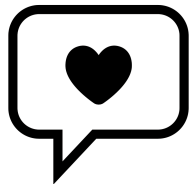
- A patient safety incident is when something preventable happens that could hurt you or did hurt you during your care. If this happens, we will explain the incident and how it might affect you and your care.

### Getting ready to talk



- Your care team will meet with you to talk about what happened.
- Please tell us how you would like this talk to happen and who you want to be there to support you.

### Your rights



- We will apologize when we tell you what happened.
- We are very sorry this happened to you.
- We are here to help and support you.

## What to expect



- We will tell you what happened and when it happened.
- We will explain why it happened and what it means for you and your support persons.
- We will tell you what will be done to make care safer.
- You can ask questions about how this affects you.

## Patient and family feedback

If you have any questions or comments after you leave the hospital, please call or email:

**Healthcare Experience team**

› Phone (toll-free): **1-844-884-4177** for all locations

**Annapolis Valley, South West, and South Shore areas**

› Email: WZpatientrelations@nshealth.ca

**Colchester, Cumberland, Pictou County, and East Hants areas**

› Email: NZpatientrelations@nshealth.ca

**Cape Breton, Antigonish, and Guysborough areas**

› Email: EZpatientrelations@nshealth.ca

**Halifax Regional Municipality, Eastern Shore, and West Hants areas**

› Email: CZpatientrelations@nshealth.ca

**Patient survey**

- We value your feedback. Please consider filling out the survey below. We are happy to mail this to you, or ask you these questions over the phone.
  › https://surveys.novascotia.ca/TakeSurvey.aspx?SurveyID=n7LKm78KJ

## If you would like more information on disclosure, please see:

- **Nova Scotia Health Disclosure of Patient Safety Incidents Policy**
  › https://library.nshealth.ca/Policy-AD-QR-010

- **Nova Scotia Health Disclosure of Patient Safety Incidents Procedure**:
  - https://library.nshealth.ca/Policy-AD-QR-010-01

**What are your questions?**

**Please ask a member of your health care team. We are here to help you.**

## Notes:

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find all patient education resources here:
www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: https://811.novascotia.ca

*Prepared by:* Quality Improvement and Safety
*Designed and Managed by:* Library Services

WX85-1448 © February 2026 Nova Scotia Health Authority
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