

# Patient Safety Tips

## Pediatric Services



**Healthy people, healthy communities –  
for generations**

Aussi disponible en français :  
*Conseils pour la sécurité des patients:*  
Services de pédiatrie (FF85-2166)



[www.nshealth.ca](http://www.nshealth.ca)

# Patient Safety Tips

- Pediatric Services is sharing the following patient safety tips to keep you and your family safe during your child's hospital visit.
- Nova Scotia Health aims to provide person-centred, high quality, safe, and sustainable health and wellness care for all Nova Scotians. We support **family presence** and **family-led care**. We recognize that children need their family and friends for their wellbeing and during the healing process.
- Parents, family members, and designated person(s)/guardians are welcomed as key members of the health care team, and full partners in care. A parent and/or designated person/guardian is required to stay with your child throughout their admission for their safety and comfort. We encourage you to ask about, understand, and be actively involved in your child's care. We will work with you to make sure your visit is as safe as possible for your child.
- Nova Scotia Health supports breastfeeding anytime and anywhere. This is a protected right in Nova Scotia. If you want or need more privacy, please ask a staff member.

## It's important to ASK.

### Ask:

- us to introduce ourselves.
- staff, family, and visitors to clean their hands when entering or leaving your child's room.
- us to check your child's hospital identification (ID) band. If your child doesn't have one, please ask us for one. It is important that your child wears a hospital ID band at all times during their hospital stay.
- us to explain or repeat anything you aren't sure about.
- who to contact to get test results (such as blood work).
- questions about any part of your child's care (such as their diagnosis and treatment plan).
- us if you think anything is wrong — trust your feelings and tell us.
- about your child's medicine, during your visit and before you go home. Make sure you understand how and when to give it, and any side effects to expect. Make sure staff explain any changes to your child's medicine, including how much to take, or when to take it.

## It's important to TELL.

### Tell:

- us what medicine(s) your child takes at home. This includes any prescription, over-the-counter, herbal, homeopathic, and/or traditional medicine(s). It is best to bring all of your child's medicine(s) with you to your visit. If you can't do this, write down what medicine(s) your child takes and how they take it. Cellphone pictures of each medicine's label can help too.
- us about any allergies your child has. It is very important to tell us if your child has any allergies to medicines, food, the environment, or latex. If your child has allergies, make sure that they get a **red ID band** during admission.  
**Note: Because of latex allergies, rubber balloons are not allowed in the hospital.**
- us if your child has been in the hospital or had surgery before.
- us what you see and think — it makes a difference. Tell staff about any changes you notice in your child. You know your child best.
- staff right away if you are curious or concerned about people entering your child's room or asking about your child, even if they are wearing a hospital uniform or ID badge.
- us if you have to leave your child alone.

## It's important to KNOW.

### Scent-free environment

Nova Scotia Health is scent-free. We ask that you, your family, and your visitors do not use any scented products. These include perfume, cologne, aftershave, hygiene products, essential oils, and scented soaps or detergents.

### Finding your way around the hospital

If you need help finding your way around the hospital, ask a staff member on the unit, at the information help desk, or at the security desk. There are also signs on the walls.

### Staff ID

- All hospital staff wear a clearly visible photo ID badge. You have the right to ask your child's health care providers to show their photo ID. **Never let your child go anywhere with someone without a photo ID badge.** Any time your child must leave their room for tests or procedures, you are welcome to go with them.
- Patients under 16 years of age are not allowed to leave the unit or go out on an approved leave or pass unless they are with their parents and/or designated person/guardian. If you are taking your child off the unit, please tell the nursing staff.

## **Privacy and confidentiality**

Thank you for helping to protect the privacy of others. Please ask for permission before:

- Taking pictures or videos of other patients or visitors. **Note:** Family members may take pictures or videos, as long as it does not interfere with patient's treatments or include other people.
- Posting information about patients, families, or staff on social networks (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.).
- Sharing personal or clinical details about your visit.

## **Security concerns**

If you have a security concern, please ask an employee or security staff for help.

## **Safety tips to protect your child from:**

### **Going missing**

It is important for families to be aware of security procedures, and to know what to do to help prevent child abduction. Every hospital has procedures, and some of the units have equipment in place to keep your child safe.

### **Entrapment (getting trapped or stuck)**

#### **Safety tips to prevent entrapment include:**

- Use a seat belt with seating equipment (such as a wheelchair, swing, stroller, high chair), as young children can trap their head or another body part.

- Place children in the right bed for their size.
- Make sure mattresses fit snugly in cribs and beds.
- Keep hospital beds in the lowest position with the brakes on.

### **Getting tangled in tubing, intravenous (IV) lines, and cords**

- Your child's nurse will check your child for their risk of getting tangled when they first get to the hospital, and throughout their hospital stay.
- **It is important to tell staff if you will not be in the room with your child, or if you have seen your child tangled in any tubing or IV lines.**


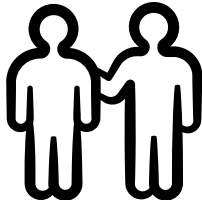
### **Safety tips to keep your child from getting tangled or being strangled include:**

- Take away any unneeded items from your child's bed.
- Keep the bed at the right height so that cords are out of your child's reach.
- Use bandages or clothing to keep tubes in place.
- Make sure oxygen tubing is placed firmly under your child's chin, not behind their neck.
- Never put anything (such as necklaces, soothers, etc.) around your child's neck.

## Falls

Nova Scotia Health uses the Humpty Dumpty Falls Prevention Program™ to assess and identify children at risk for falls. Always make sure the call bell is within reach so you or your child can get help. Some medicines can make your child sleepy or dizzy, which can cause them to be unsteady on their feet. It is important to know how medicines may affect your child so you can be aware of the risk of falls.


### To lower the risk of falls:

- Never leave your child unsupervised in a highchair or infant swing.
- Ask someone to help you help your child to sit, stand up, or go to the bathroom, if needed.
- Make sure your child uses nonskid footwear that fits. 
- Go with your child to the bathroom if they have medical equipment attached (such as an IV pole), and when they are getting up for the first time after surgery. 

We will give you more information on ways to help prevent falls. Please ask nursing staff if you have any questions or concerns.



## Infections

- Proper hand cleaning with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer or soap and water is the best way to prevent the spread of infections. Protect your child from germs by washing your hands when you come and go from their room. 
- Always ask your child's health care provider if they have washed their hands before they provide your child's care.
- **Hand hygiene is also extremely important when you go to the common areas of the unit, such as the kitchen and family room. Please use the hand sanitizer located throughout the hospital.**
- Ask family and friends who have colds or other infectious illnesses (such as flu, diarrhea, vomiting, fever, or rash) not to visit your child in the hospital.
- If your child has an infection in which they need to stay in an isolation room, we will ask they not have visitors during this time. Please stay in the room with your child. This is to protect your child and also others being cared for on the unit.

## **Pressure ulcers and skin breakdown**

Pressure ulcers are sores caused by constant pressure on the skin. Your child's nurse will check your child's risk when they first get to the hospital, and then throughout their hospital stay.

### **Things that cause a child to get a pressure ulcer include:**

- Being less active, such as when children stay in a bed, chair, or wheelchair for a long time, or have trouble changing position without help.
- Damp skin from sweating, or dirty or wet diapers.
- Constant pressure on their skin from equipment such as an oxygen mask, a splint, an IV, or a feeding tube.
- Not eating well – although this does not cause pressure ulcers, it increases your child's risk of getting them.

### **Steps to prevent pressure ulcers include:**

- Have your child walk and change position often, unless the staff tells you not to.
- Do not pull or rub your child's skin against a surface over and over. For example, use a sheet to move your child if they are sliding down in their bed.

- Check your child’s skin for redness and tell staff right away about any areas of their skin that worry you.
- Use a soft cloth and be gentle when bathing. Do not rub or massage a red area.
- Keep their skin dry. Get rid of any moisture from sweat or urine (pee) right away by changing diapers and sheets, as needed.
- Make sure your child eats healthy foods. Ask to talk to a  dietitian if your child is not eating well and, therefore, at risk for getting a pressure ulcer.

**Tell staff if you see any new areas of redness or skin breakdown on your child.**

## **Safety tips for:**

### **Sleep**

Children under age 3 are safer in a crib, even if they do not sleep in one at home. **Bedside rails must be locked in the full ‘up’ position at all times.** Never leave a crib or bed with the side rails down or in the middle position **unless someone is standing right at the bedside.**

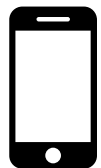
- Keep the height of the crib/bed in the lowest position to prevent falls.
- Do not let your baby/child sleep in the cot/bed with you.

- All babies/children in cribs will be checked to see if a crib dome is needed or if they will remain safely in their crib without one.
- Take away all toys, food, etc. from your child's crib/bed when they are sleeping.
- Do not leave anything that could hurt your child (such as strings, wires, cords, necklaces, beads) in the crib/bed.
- If your child's arm and/or leg is sticking out between the crib rails, move them so their arm and/or leg is inside the crib.

### **Internet use**

Be aware if your child is using the hospital's free Wi-Fi and read the terms of agreement. You are responsible for monitoring your child's Internet use. The hospital does not guarantee the safety of any websites. For example:

- Review the social networking sites your child visits to make sure they do not have any identifying information (such as photos, profile information, online diary).
- Be aware of and involved in the sites your child is visiting, including their activities and interactions (such as gaming sites with chat).
- Be mindful of screen time. Healthy sleep patterns are important for recovery. Looking at a phone, tablet, or TV screen can make it harder to fall asleep.



## Medicine safety

Know what medicine(s) your child is taking and why they are taking it. Make sure you know the name, dose, and how many times a day it should be taken. Ask your pharmacist for a list of current medicines if you're not sure. Remember to include any over-the-counter medicines, like acetaminophen (Tylenol®), ibuprofen (Advil®), vitamins, herbal products, and/or supplements.



### During your hospital visit, make sure:

- Your health care provider repeats back your child's name correctly before giving them any medicine.
- You tell your health care provider of any allergies or reactions to medicines your child has had.
- Your health care provider tells you what medicine your child is being given and why.
- You ask questions if the medicine looks different from what was taken at home, or from what was given in the hospital before.
- You ask for a list of all the medicines your child will be taking after they leave the hospital. Keep this list with you.



- You talk to your child's health care provider about any questions or concerns about their medicine(s) (such as how to know if it is working, how long your child will be taking it, any side effects, etc.).

Tell your health care provider about any medicine(s) you have brought to the hospital.

**Personal medicine belonging to you or your child should never be kept at your child's bedside.**

## **Play**

Play is important for your child to get used to being in the hospital, and for their recovery.

Please bring your child's favourite toy(s) with you. As all toys must be washed between each use, please do NOT return toys to the playroom. Keep them in your child's room.

## **In common waiting areas:**

- Watch your child at all times.
- Check with staff before bringing in food or drinks.
- Keep the doorways clear.
- Make sure all electronic devices and/or toys are charged to avoid the tripping hazard of cords.

## **Bathing**

- Make sure children are supervised in the tub/shower at all times.
- Make sure you can reach the call bell at all times.
- Make sure the water temperature is not too hot before placing your child in the tub/shower. Use your elbow to check the temperature.
- It is important to know how your child may be affected by their medicine(s) before they take a bath/shower.
- Drain the tub as soon as your child finishes bathing to prevent drowning. Never leave a tub full of water unattended.



**Partner with us to protect your child's safety.  
We welcome your questions and comments.**

**Please use the space on the back cover for  
your notes.**

Write down your questions, or anything you  
want to remember.

