

Kaiser Permanente Patient Safety Department

For more information on how to be a wise health care consumer, visit kp.org.



Patient Safety

JOIN YOUR HEALTH
CARE TEAM

At Kaiser Permanente, we care about your health and safety. You are the most important part of your health care team. Here are some ways to work with your medical team when you visit our medical offices or hospitals.

1. Ask questions.

If you have questions, write them down and bring the list to your appointments. After your questions are answered, summarize the information in your own words. This helps your doctor ensure that the information is clear. It's a good idea to ask questions before you are given a medical test, when your doctor prescribes medication, and before you begin a medical treatment.

What to ask:*

- What is my main problem?
- What do I need to do about it?
- Why is it important for me to do this?

2. Bring a friend.

Invite a friend or family member to come with you. He or she can help you ask questions, remember answers, and speak up for you if you're having trouble communicating; but remember, this is *your* appointment.

3. Help us stop the spread of infections.

- **Hand washing**—Ask us if we've washed our hands. Cleaning our hands, before and after contact with every patient, reduces the risk of infection. And remember to wash your hands after you use the bathroom and before you eat. You can use soap and water, or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- **Cover your cough**—If you sneeze or cough, turn your face away from others and cough into your elbow or use a tissue. Throw the tissue away and then clean your hands with soap and water, or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth to prevent spreading germs. And be sure that visitors and family members who come to see you are not sick with a cold or the flu. Your visitors and family members should wash their hands before and after their visit.
- **Be safe**—Sometimes, you may have an infection or other condition that requires extra precautions so it isn't spread to other patients. In that case, your caregivers may use gowns, gloves, or masks to care for you. You and your family will be given further instructions about this if needed.

*Adapted with permission from Ask Me 3™ by the "Partnership for Clear Health Communication."



4. Be patient with questions from your medical team.

Different members of your medical team may ask you the same questions several times, such as your name or whether you have allergies. Asking these questions is one way to make sure that you're getting the right care.

5. Tell your medical team about your medications.

Bring a list of all your medications to your appointments, including over-the-counter medicines such as aspirin or ibuprofen (for example, Motrin or Advil) and any vitamins or herbal supplements you take.[†] You can also bring in your medications instead of making a list. Learn more about the medications you're taking at kp.org/medications.

Make sure you understand what your medications are for and how to take them properly. Ask about side effects and which foods, drinks, over-the-counter drugs, or herbal supplements to avoid. Also ask your doctor if you should avoid certain activities. And remember to read the labels to make sure the medications the pharmacist gives you are the ones your doctor ordered.

6. Understand your test results.

Ask your doctor how and when to get your test results, and make sure you understand what the results mean. View your recent test results and learn more about them at kp.org/myhealth. Call your doctor or nurse if you have any questions.

7. Talk about your expectations.

Talk to your doctor about the results you expect from your treatment or procedure. Discuss what your recovery time might be and ask if your expectations are realistic.

8. Talk about your surgery.

We do many things to ensure your safety, before, during, and after surgery. You'll be asked the same questions many times such as your name, the type of procedure that you're going to have, and the place on your body where the procedure will be performed. In many cases, the part of your body where the procedure will be performed is marked and you may be involved in this marking. Each of these steps helps ensure your safety. Please speak up if you are not asked these questions or if you have any concerns. Visit kp.org/surgery for more information.

To help prevent infections from your surgery:

- Your surgical staff cleans their hands and arms up to their elbows with special soap before surgery
- You may be given antibiotics before surgery
- Before surgery your skin is cleaned with a soap that kills germs
- Only sterilized equipment is used

9. Call for help right away.

While you are in the hospital, we want to respond to changes in your condition quickly. Contact the nurse in charge or the supervisor if you or your family member has concerns about your condition, treatment, services, or safety. You'll be provided additional information while you are in the hospital on how to get immediate help.

10. Create an Advance Health Care Directive.

An Advance Health Care Directive is an important legal document that describes your treatment wishes. It allows you to choose someone to make decisions for you if you are unable to make them or speak for

yourself. Contact your local Health Education Department or visit kp.org/advancedirectives to learn more.

11. Learn to care for yourself at home.

Make sure you know which medications to take and how often, when your follow-up tests or appointments are, and when you can resume your regular diet and activities. Ask anyone on your medical team if you are unsure about anything.

If you have concerns about your safety or your care, please talk about them with your health care team. If you don't understand the answers you receive, always ask for more information. Our goal is to provide you with the safest care possible.

Remember, if you have any concerns about your safety or about infections, please speak up.

[†]Kaiser Permanente does not endorse the medications or products mentioned. Any trade names listed are for easy identification only.