

# Hospital Safety

~ A Legal Overview of Failing Hospitals & Your Rights ~

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We don't always know when we'll need medical care.  
Take some time to read over this quick guide.

# Chapters

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2. Biggest Hospital Mistakes
3. Top Tips for Helping Hospitals
4. Worst Hospitals in the Country
5. Hospital Check-In Checklist
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# Most Common Hospital Dangers



## **Hcd`HYb`H ]b[ g`hc`K UW `: cf`**

**%`A ]gg]b[ `cf`bUWfUH`bZfa Uhcb`cb`Mci f`XYbh]ZU]cb`6 fUW`Yh**

Check your ID bracelet as soon as you get it. Make sure everything is accurate, including your date of birth. If you have a colored bracelet or bracelets ask what the colors stand for. Many hospitals use color-coded bracelets to represent a variety of information about their patients. There is no standard for what those colors mean from one hospital to the next. Some are for patients with a do not resuscitate order (DNR).

**&`Mci f`A YX]U]cb`@c\_g`cf`HUghYg`8 ]ZfYbhcf`]g`5 Xa ]b]ghYfYX`UhU8 ]ZfYbhH]a Y`**

Medication errors are frighteningly common in hospitals. Don't hesitate to speak up if something seems different or wrong when it comes to the medication they are giving you. Signs that there may be an error include medicine that looks are tastes different from before and receiving medication at a different time from when they normally give it to you. Whether it taken orally or by injection, always ask the name of the drug, the dose and what it's for.

**'`bUXYei UH`< UbX`K Ug\ ]b[ `**

Don't let anyone touch you or your food without washing their hands first. You need to see it with your own eyes. Don't ask them if they washed their hands. Tell them you didn't see them do it and would they please do it again. Hand sanitizer is considered an acceptable alternative to soap and water.

**(`@U] ]b[ `7 U\ YHfg`]b`D`UW`Hcc`@b[ `**

The longer a catheter is in place, the greater the risk of infection. Every day, ask if it can be removed.

**)`: U]i fYhc`DfYj Ybh6`ccX7`ctg`**

Every patient should be screened for blood clot risk and the proper measures must be taken to prevent clots from forming. Ask your doctor or nurse what they are doing to keep you from getting a blood clot.

**\*`A ]g`UVY`YX`GdY]a Ybg`**

Mislabeled blood samples and other specimens are a sure route to misdiagnosis. Insist that all specimens be labeled in front of you.

**+ "Gca Yh ]b[ 'l bYl dYWYX`]g<UddYb]b[ ' "**

If something is happening that you didn't expect, or something isn't happening that you were expecting, speak up immediately. There could be a serious mix up. Poor communication and patient tracking mistakes can have fatal consequences. You certainly don't want to undergo a procedure meant for another patient.

**, "l bbYWggUfmiHYglg`H Uh9l dcgY`Mci `hc`FUX]U]cb` "**

X-rays and certain other imaging tests expose you to radiation, increasing your cancer risk. X-ray, CT scan, CAT scan, and radiograph are all terms for medical imaging tests that involve radiation. Ask if the test is necessary and if a safer test, such as MRI, can be used instead.

**- "Mci f: U`F]g\_`]g`Bch5 XXfYggYX` "**

Ask what your fall risk level is and what is being done to minimize your risk. If you are not supposed to try to walk on your own, someone should have let you know so that you can call for help when you have to go to the bathroom. You may be attached to an alarm that alerts nurses if you get out of bed.

**%"8 ]gW Uf[ Y`Hcc`9Uf`mcf`K ]h ci h7 ca d`YH`-bg]fi W]cbg` "**

Meeting the necessary medical milestones is just one requirement for discharge from the hospital. You have to be prepared for the transition to home. You may need special equipment and someone to care for you at home. You must be given instructions for caring for yourself that are complete and that you thoroughly understand. Repeat the instructions back to your doctor or nurse to ensure you've really got it.

# Biggest Hospital Mistakes



## **A YX]WU`A UdfUW]WY'7 UgYg'Mci `BYYX'hc`? bck `5 Vci h**

Hospital errors often go undetected, sometimes because they cause no noticeable harm. But some mistakes are so extreme and shocking, it is hard to believe that they can happen. Wrong site surgery, leaving instruments inside of patients after surgery, and ignoring emergency room patients for hours until they finally die, are among some of the most horrifying types of hospital malpractice. Sadly, these things have happened, and they will probably happen again.

### **K fcb[ `G]hY'6 fU]b`Gi f[ Yfm**

Wrong site surgery is always an inexcusable error, but it is difficult to imagine how it can happen three times in the same year, during the same type of surgery, in the same hospital. In 2007, that is exactly what happened at Rhode Island Hospital in Providence, R.I. Three separate brain surgeries, on three different patients, performed by different surgeons were all performed on the wrong side of the brain.

### **K ca Ub`± bcfYX`]b`9a Yf[ YbWniFcca `**

Esmin Green sat in the waiting room at Kings County Medical Center for nearly 24 hours before she collapsed and died. The staff and other patients ignored her, even after she collapsed and was thrashing about on the floor. She stopped moving about 30 minutes after she collapsed, and about 30 minutes after that nurse finally checked her pulse. She was dead.

The entire incident was caught on security video.

### **Gi f[ ]WU`-bg]fi a Ybh`@Zi]b`DU]Yb]h]6 cXmi**

Before closing up surgical patients, surgeons and staff are supposed to count all the instruments and objects to make sure they haven't left anything inside. Gauze and sponges left in a patient's body can lead to severe and fatal infections. It's an unacceptable mistake, but it isn't hard to imagine how something small, soft and blood-soaked might be overlooked.

A 10-inch metal retractor, is a different story. A retractor is an instrument that closely resembles a pair of scissors. That is what was left in Daryoush Mazarei's abdominal cavity after a shunt was installed in his chest to drain fluid from his brain. When he complained of excruciating pain, his doctor told him to get psychiatric help. The surgical instrument was eventually found with a CT scan, and removed.

Most hospital mistakes do not draw the kind of attention that the glaring errors above garner, but they can still kill you, leave you permanently disabled, or cause you years of suffering before the underlying cause is discovered. If you suspect that you have been a victim of hospital malpractice, take action right away.

# Top Tips for Helping Hospitals





## **Be sure to provide your full medical history to the best of your ability.**

When you go to the hospital you probably expect to be adequately cared for by competent professionals. Unfortunately, you can't count on it.

Overworked doctors and nurses, poor hospital policies, and the often-chaotic atmosphere can lead to deadly or debilitating mistakes. Hospital errors are far too common, but there are some things that you can do as a patient to help prevent errors.

## **Bring your supplements and medications with you, as well as a list.**

Hopefully, the hospital will have your medical records, but don't rely on it.

- Be sure to provide your full medical history to the best of your ability. This should include any allergies as well as current and prior health conditions.
- Bring your supplements and medications with you, as well as a list.
- When medication is administered, always ask what it is, what it's for, and what side effects it may have.
- Verbally remind hospital staff of your medication allergies and anything you should not have, each time they administer a medication to you.

## **Misdiagnosis, delayed diagnosis, and failure to diagnose are among the most common medical errors.**

Misdiagnosis, delayed diagnosis, and failure to diagnose are among the most common medical errors. The risk is high in the emergency room.

If the diagnosis you receive does not fit the symptoms, speak up. If you suspect a condition or event and the doctors are not listening to your concerns, you need to talk to someone who will.

For instance, there is a narrow window of time in which stroke can be effectively treated, but many doctors do not look for stroke in patients who appear young and healthy.

However, young women taking certain types of birth control are at risk for stroke, and people with no known risk factors do suffer strokes.

## **Make sure your surgeon, not a surgical nurse or someone else, initials the surgical site before you go into surgery.**

Surgical errors, especially wrong site surgery, are the stuff of nightmares. They do happen and the results are almost always irreversible. As a patient, taking an active role in your care can help prevent surgical mistakes.

- Make sure your surgeon, not a surgical nurse or someone else, initials the surgical site before you go into surgery.

- Insist on meeting personally with your surgeon right before surgery to confirm the surgical site.
- Take a close friend or family member with you who can speak up on your behalf when you are unconscious.

### **GdYU\_]b[ 'i d'**

Never be afraid to ask questions and voice your concerns. There is no such thing as “too much information” in a hospital setting. Let your doctors and nurses know about all of your symptoms, new symptoms, and worsening symptoms right away.

When something seems wrong, or you do not understand something about your treatment, ask questions. You play a large role in making sure that you are getting the right care.

# Worst Hospitals in the Country



Twice a year, more than 2,500 hospitals throughout the nation are rated for patient safety. The Hospital Safety Score uses information from multiple sources, including the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Leapfrog Hospital Survey.

It uses 28 measures to come up with a single score for each hospital, ranking its performance in keeping patients safe from preventable harm. The following website identifies the worst hospitals, those that scored a D or an F in each state: [Spring 2016 Hospital Safety Scores](#).

### Hospitals with the Worst Scores

Hospitals in the following states scored at least a C or above:

- Alaska
- Colorado
- Idaho
- Massachusetts
- Maine
- Montana
- Nebraska
- New Hampshire
- Rhode Island
- South Dakota
- Virginia
- Vermont
- Wisconsin
- Wyoming

Hospitals in Maryland were not scored because they are not required to publically report safety data.

### Hospitals with the Worst Scores

Hospitals that received the worst score, listed by state.

#### California

- Victor Valley Community Hospital
- Methodist Hospital of Southern California
- Whittier Hospital Medical Center
- Downey Regional Medical Center
- Tulare Regional Medical Center

#### District of Columbia

- Providence Hospital of Washington

Kansas

- Western Plains Medical Complex

Michigan

- UP Health System – Portage

New Jersey

- Saint Michael's Medical Center

New York

- Stony Brook University Hospital
- Wyckoff Heights Medical Center
- St. Joseph's Medical Center of Yonkers
- The Brooklyn Hospital Center

Oklahoma

- McAlester Regional Health Center

Pennsylvania

- Clarion Hospital

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Alabama

- UAB Medical Center Medical West
- University of South Alabama Medical Center

Arizona

- Sierra Vista Regional Health Center
- Tempe St. Luke's Hospital
- Maricopa Integrated Health System
- St. Luke's Medical Center

Arkansas

- St. Bernard's Medical Center
- North Metro Medical Center
- Washington Regional Medical Center
- Sparks Regional Medical Center

California

- Pioneers Memorial Healthcare District
- El Centro Regional Medical Center
- Arrowhead Regional Medical Center
- Parkview Community Hospital Medical Center
- Corona Regional Medical Center

- AHMC Anaheim Regional Medical Center
- Garden Grove Hospital and Medical Center
- San Gabriel Valley Medical Center
- Monterey Park Hospital
- California Hospital Medical Center
- Los Angeles County - Harbor UCLA Medical Center
- Providence Holy Cross Medical Center
- Northridge Hospital Medical Center-Roscoe Boulevard Campus
- Bakersfield Heart Hospital
- Rideout Memorial Hospital
- Fremont Medical Center
- San Joaquin General Hospital
- Queen of the Valley Medical Center
- Santa Clara Valley Medical Center
- St. Rose Hospital
- San Leandro Hospital
- Sonoma Valley Hospital
- Alameda County Medical Center Highland Hospital
- San Francisco General Hospital Medical Center
- San Mateo Medical Center

#### Connecticut

- Manchester Memorial Hospital
- Charlotte Hungerford Hospital
- Danbury Hospital

#### Delaware

- Beebe Healthcare

#### District of Columbia

- Danbury Hospital
- MedStar Washington Hospital Center
- Howard University Hospital

#### Florida

- Jackson North Medical Center
- Plantation General Hospital
- Broward Health Coral Springs
- Jackson South Community Hospital
- St. Cloud Regional Medical Center
- Heart of Florida Regional Medical Center
- UF Health Jacksonville
- Bayfront Health Punta Gorda
- Bayfront Health Port Charlotte
- Munroe Regional Medical Center

- Venice Regional Bayfront Health
- Tampa General Hospital
- Bayfront Health St. Petersburg
- Desoto Memorial Hospital

#### Georgia

- Stephens County Hospital
- The Medical Center, Navicent Health
- Rockdale Medical Center
- Dekalb Medical at Hillandale
- Dekalb Medical Center
- Grady Memorial Hospital

#### Hawaii

- Kona Community Hospital

#### Illinois

- Franciscan St. James Health - Chicago Heights
- Holy Cross Hospital
- Mount Sinai Hospital
- Franciscan St. James Health - Olympia Fields
- Passavant Area Hospital

#### Indiana

- St. Joseph Hospital of Fort Wayne
- Eskenazi Health
- St. Joseph Hospital and Health Center

#### Iowa

- Trinity Muscatine

#### Kansas

- Hutchinson Regional Medical Center

#### Kentucky

- Saint Joseph East
- Saint Joseph Hospital
- Lake Cumberland Regional Hospital
- University of Louisville Hospital
- Jewish Hospital
- Sts. Mary & Elizabeth Hospital

#### Louisiana

- Iberia Medical Center
- Lake Charles Memorial Hospital

## Michigan

- McLaren Macomb
- Hurley Medical Center
- UP Health System – Marquette

## Minnesota

- Hennepin County Medical Center

## Mississippi

- Highland Community Hospital
- Crossgates River Oaks Hospital
- University Hospitals and Health System, University of Mississippi Medical Center
- Delta Regional Medical Center

## Missouri

- Saint Francis Medical Center
- St. Anthony's Medical Center of St. Louis
- Poplar Bluff Regional Medical Center
- Truman Medical Center Hospital Hill

## Nevada

- North Vista Hospital
- University Medical Center of Southern Nevada
- Carson Tahoe Health

## New Jersey

- Meadowlands Hospital Medical Center

## New Mexico

- CHRISTUS St. Vincent Regional Medical Center
- Memorial Medical Center

## New York

- Peconic Bay Medical Center
- Brookhaven Memorial Hospital Medical Center
- Northwell Health System - Southside Hospital
- Jamaica Hospital Medical Center
- Flushing Hospital Medical Center
- Northwell Health System - Forest Hills Hospital
- Brookdale Hospital Medical Center
- Westchester Medical Center
- Kings County Hospital Center
- New York Methodist Hospital



- Northwell Health System - Lenox Hill Hospital
- Maimonides Medical Center
- Lutheran Medical Center
- Richmond University Medical Center
- MidHudson Regional Hospital of Westchester Medical Center
- Samaritan Hospital of Troy
- Albany Memorial Hospital
- HealthAlliance of the Hudson Valley - Broadway Campus
- Catskill Regional Medical Center of Harris
- Our Lady of Lourdes Memorial Hospital
- SUNY Upstate Medical University Hospital
- Upstate University Hospital - Community Campus
- Arnot Ogden Medical Center
- F.F. Thompson Hospital
- Eastern Niagara Hospital Lockport
- Eastern Niagara Hospital Inter-Community

#### North Carolina

- Maria Parham Medical Center
- Southeastern Regional Medical Center
- Rutherford Hospital
- Haywood Regional Medical Center
- Harris Regional Hospital

#### North Dakota

- Trinity Hospital

#### Ohio

- East Liverpool City Hospital
- University of Toledo Medical Center

#### Oklahoma

- Hillcrest Hospital South
- St. John Medical Center
- Hillcrest Medical Center
- AllianceHealth Durant
- Midwest Regional Medical Center
- OU Medical Center Edmond

#### Oregon

- Good Samaritan Regional Medical Ctr

#### Pennsylvania

- Lehigh Valley Hospital – Hazleton
- Nason Hospital

#### South Carolina

- Novant Health Gaffney Medical Center

#### Tennessee

- Regional One Health

#### Texas

- CHI St. Luke's Health Memorial Livingston
- Palestine Regional Medical Center-East
- St Luke's Hospital at the Vintage
- St Luke's Sugar Land Hospital
- Citizens Medical Center
- Valley Regional Medical Center
- Nix Medical Center
- Southwest General Hospital
- University Medical Center of El Paso

#### Utah

- Salt Lake Regional Medical Center

#### Washington

- Deaconess Medical Center
- Yakima Valley Memorial Hospital
- Swedish Medical Center Cherry Hill
- Highline Medical Center
- Southwest Washington Medical Center

#### West Virginia

- Summersville Regional Medical Center
- Bluefield Regional Medical Center

## Hospital Check-In Checklist

When you know you are going to be in the hospital you can and should plan ahead. Since hospital visits often start with an emergency, it's a good idea to be as well prepared as possible.

Make sure someone close to you, preferably the person you normally list as your emergency contact, always has an up-to-date copy of pertinent lists and documents. When anything changes, such as the medications or supplements you take, you need to make updates. You should review your documents and lists for accuracy on at least an annual basis.

✓	Download and Use the Hospital Check-In Checklist
	Take all of your medications and supplements that with you. Also make a list of what you take and the dosages, as well as any allergies. Give a copy of the list to your doctor and the person in charge on your floor.
	If you have a friend or family member with you as an advocate and helper, make sure you fill out the proper forms so that they can have access to all of your information.
	Introduce your helper to the person in charge on your floor, and provide his or her name and contact information.
	Give your admitting doctor and the person in charge in your floor a copy of your living will, health care directive, or do not resuscitate (DNR) order, if you have one in place.
	Hand over a copy of your medical power of attorney designating the person who will make medical decisions for you should you be unable to. Make sure to include your health care agent's contact information.
	Check your patient ID bracelet. Make sure the information is accurate and complete. If you have a colored wristband or there are symbols or markings, ask a nurse what they mean.
	Find out who will be in charge of coordinating your care and how to contact that person. This may be someone other than your doctor, such as a hospitalist.
	Find out if the hospital has a patient representative, or patient advocate, and how you contact that person. The patient advocate is there to help you when you have complaints, concerns or questions during your hospital stay.
	Get the best phone number and extension for family and friends to call to check on you or speak to you, and make sure you've authorized the hospital to communicate with the people you want to be able to get information on your condition. The hospital may provide you with a code word to give to friends and family that staff is allowed to speak with.

# How to Get Help if You've Been Hurt



