



## PATIENT SAFETY - HOW YOU CAN HELP

# INFORMATION

## Patient

Sault Area Hospital strives to maintain a safe environment for our patients. In order to provide for the dignity, rights and independence of the patient, families may be asked to assist, where possible, in providing an additional dimension to the care provided in situations where patients may be confused, agitated or at risk of injury if not under closer surveillance.

The hospital maintains a policy of least restraint whereby restraints are applied only in circumstances where available options have been assessed as ineffective. By enlisting the assistance of family members/friends who are willing to provide assistance during periods which may warrant additional observation, the hospital is better able to provide a safer environment while still preserving the patient's self-dignity. How can the family provide assistance? Patients at risk of falling, climbing out of bed during periods of confusion, or dislodging tubes, may need someone familiar to sit by the bedside in order to orient them to time and place.

During the stay, your family member may forget to use the call bell to ask the nurse for assistance to the washroom and attempt to do so on their own which could result in a fall. Your presence may serve as a gentle reminder that extra precaution is needed when in an unfamiliar surrounding especially during the first few days of the hospital stay. Often patients will pull at the tubes/dressings following a procedure and may need to be reminded that they are in a hospital and that the tubes/ dressings, although uncomfortable, are necessary for their treatment.

To maximize the safety of patients who are at risk of leaving the hospital without authorization, we have adopted the Yellow Jacket program. A patient may be unable to understand the risks of leaving the hospital due to illness, confusion, dementia or any other medical reason that causes a temporary or a permanent condition. If elopement is a risk, the patient will be provided with a Yellow Jacket to make them easily visible to, and quickly identifiable, to all staff.

Family members and/or friends are not being asked to provide nursing care but to provide an additional set of eyes. If a family member is able to assist, their participation will create an opportunity for family members to play an important role in providing a familiar face in an unfamiliar setting and assist in the overall recovery.

If you are unable to assist but wish to exercise the option of hiring a private duty nurse, let the nurse know about these arrangements. Please keep in mind that you or your private insurer will be responsible for payment of the private duty nurse.

Reference: Adapted with permission from London Health Sciences Center.

