

# TO YOUR HEALTH

Carleton-Willard Out-Patient Clinic

100 Old Billerica Road, Bedford MA 01730

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## Headed to the hospital?

By Susan Cusson, NP

Sometimes a trip to the hospital comes unexpectedly; at other times it's planned. Either way, being an informed and empowered patient can go a long way when it comes to your overall health, especially in the hospital setting. Here's some advice that can make your experience safer and more comfortable.



Having someone with you when you're in the hospital to act as your advocate can be invaluable. When you're acutely ill it's not easy to advocate for yourself. A close friend or family member can help by asking questions and providing information about your history. In a 2014 survey by Consumer Reports, those who had an advocate with them in the hospital were 15 percent more likely to say that they had been treated respectfully by medical personnel. Also know that when you are hospitalized, a nurse at Carleton-Willard communicates with the case manager at the hospital to coordinate your discharge planning.

What else can you do to advocate for yourself? Keeping your medical information up to date is critical. The Vial of Life is an important part of your medical record. It includes your medical diagnoses, medications, allergies and important contact information about family/health care proxy. Is your Vial of

Life up to date? Does it accurately reflect the current medications you're taking? When you go to the hospital from Carleton-Willard, a copy of your Vial of Life goes with you. At the hospital the list of all medications ordered upon admission to the hospital must be compared — or reconciled — with the list of medications you were taking before entering the hospital. If your list of medications on your Vial of Life is not accurate, it could result in a medication error. For instance, if you stop a medication because of a side effect but it's still on your Vial of Life, you might be given that medicine in the hospital. Or you might not receive a newer medication if it hasn't been added to your list.



Medication errors are all too common, they can occur anywhere in the healthcare system, in hospitals, clinics, surgery centers, doctors' offices, nursing homes, pharmacies, even your own home. Responsibility for medication accuracy lies with all those involved. Doctors, nurses, pharmacists and patients need to work together to avoid mistakes.

According to a report from the Institute of Medicine titled 'Preventing Medical Errors', experience from hundreds of organizations has shown that poor communication of medical information

at transition points is responsible for as many as 50 percent of all medication errors and up to 20 percent of adverse drug events in the hospital. Transition points include but are not limited to hospital admissions and discharges.

Communication is essential. Urgent visits to the Clinic are communicated to your Primary Care Physician (PCP). This ensures that your PCP is aware of changes in your health status and medications. If you have a primary care physician (PCP) outside of Carleton-Willard, or if you see a specialist, we ask that you contact the Clinic with any medication changes, new diagnosis or serious illness. Your assistance in requesting information from the visit helps improve communication and assures your medical record here at CWV is kept up to date. Simply ask the doctors office to fax a note after the visit. The fax number for the Clinic is 781-276-1934.



When a change in your medication is made at the Clinic, we automatically update the Vial of Life in your medical record. It's up to you to make that change on the copies you have at home. An updated copy of your Vial of Life is sent to you every six months. When you receive the new copy please review it for accuracy, make any corrections and return it to the Clinic. The Clinic will update your record with any changes you indicate and send you a new copy. Please remember to replace the old copy in your refrigerator vial and the wallet-size copy.

When you go to the Clinic for a visit, especially if you haven't been there in a while, please bring your medications with you for review. Medication reconciliation, or making sure your record accurately matches what you're taking, is vitally important. Good communication, keeping documents up to date and having an advocate with you in the hospital all contribute to making a hospital stay successful.

### **HEALTH EDUCATION LECTURE**

**On Wednesday, June 3, 2015.**

**Susan Cusson, NP**

**will present a health lecture education talk on "Falls Prevention".**

**Falls are the leading cause of serious injury in older adults.**

**Susan, the Clinic NP, will discuss risk factors and ways to prevent falls.**

**Marcelo Knapik, Fitness Assistant, will demonstrate some balance exercises.**

**Please join us for this interactive discussion.**

**Auditorium Center from 10:30—11:30 am**

### **SATURDAY CLINIC**

**The Clinic will continue to be open every Saturday from 9am-12noon. The weekly reminder in Bits will end, any future changes in Clinic hours will be announced in Bits. You can make an appointment or walk-in if you are feeling ill. To avoid waiting, it's best to call ahead.**