

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Children's Hospitals Offer Safety Tips for Patient Families During National Patient Safety Awareness Week**

February 28, 2014 – As National Patient Safety Awareness Week—*Navigate Your Health . . . Safely*—kicks off next week (March 2 – 8, 2014) children's hospitals around the country are affirming the critical role patient families play in making hospital stays as safe as possible for their children.

A national learning network of children's hospitals—[Children's Hospitals' Solutions for Patient Safety](#) (SPS) and the [Children's Hospital Association](#)—are collaborating to offer safety tips for families to follow when visiting the hospital with their child.

"SPS is a network of hospitals who are teaching and learning from each other to provide the safest possible care in children's hospitals across the country for every patient coming through our doors," said Michael Fisher, president and CEO, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, and chair of SPS. "The family is the most critical part of a patient's caregiving team, and there are things that families and patients can do to help us. So, we are encouraging patients and their families to follow some simple, yet potentially life-saving tips during National Patient Safety Awareness Week and each time that they visit a children's hospital."

Through transparent sharing of data, successes, and learnings, SPS is working to achieve specific goals to reduce harm in pediatric hospitals across the country. Specifically, by year-end 2014, SPS hospitals will work to achieve a 40 percent reduction in [certain hospital-acquired conditions](#); a 20 percent reduction in readmissions; and a 25 percent reduction in serious safety events. SPS began in Ohio in 2009 as a network of eight hospitals. It has now [expanded to 78 hospitals across the country](#), all focused on reducing harm by addressing specific hospital acquired conditions and building a "culture of safety" within each hospital.

"We applaud SPS for its groundbreaking effort to advance patient safety and for serving as an outstanding partner in our common efforts to develop sustainable solutions to deliver safer and cost-effective care for patients and families," said Mark Wietecha, president and CEO, Children's Hospital Association. "Children's hospitals nationwide are committed to empowering patients and families to take charge of their own safety when in a health care setting."

Tips for patient families include the following:

1. BE A PATIENT ADVOCATE FOR YOUR CHILD. Don't be shy. Ask questions about your child's care, raise safety concerns you have, or ask the caregiver to double check their chart before they

act. Write down your questions to make sure the caregiver addresses them. You might say, "Excuse me; I have a few questions before you start treatment, would you mind answering them, please?"

2. **YOU KNOW YOUR CHILD BEST.** Share unique things about your child with caregivers that may be important for your child's overall care (i.e. they have a fear of animals, or only like to eat food cut in small pieces).
3. **WASH.** Wash your hands and your child's hands when entering and leaving the hospital, your patient room, the bathroom and any treatment rooms (such as x-ray); and be sure to wash if you have handled any soiled material.
4. **ENSURE THEY WASH, TOO.** Since you are part of your child's health care team, do not be afraid to remind doctors and nurses about washing their hands before working with you—even if they are wearing gloves. You might say, "Excuse me; I didn't see you wash your hands. I'd like to be sure everyone's hands are clean. Please wash them before caring for my child."
5. **STAY CLEAN AND DRY.** If your child has an intravenous catheter or a wound, keep the skin around the dressing clean and dry, and let your caregiver know if the dressing gets wet or loose.
6. **WATCH FOR RED OR IRRITATED SKIN.** If you notice any new redness or irritation on your child's skin, notify your child's caregivers. Ask what steps can be taken to prevent harm to the skin.
7. **KNOW THE MEDS.** Ask for the names of the medications your child is receiving in the hospital and how it is expected to help your child. Caregivers will check your child's identification band before giving a medication to make certain the correct medication is being given. If you don't see this, ask staff to double check that the medication is for your child. You might say, "Excuse me, that medication is not familiar to me. Can you please double check it against my child's chart?"
8. **BE PREPARED WHEN GOING HOME.** When your child is ready to go home from the hospital, make certain you know what medications and/or treatments your child will need once home. Ask what you should watch for that will require a call to your child's doctor and which doctor to call if questions come up. Also, ask when your child will need to follow up with a physician appointment.

More information about pediatric patient safety is available at [www.solutionsforpatientsafety.org](http://www.solutionsforpatientsafety.org). More information about the Children's Hospital Association is available at [www.childrenshospitals.net](http://www.childrenshospitals.net). The National Patient Safety Foundation has an online resource center with tips and tools for patients and their families available at: <http://www.npsf.org/for-patients-consumers/tools-and-resources-for-patients-and-consumers/>.

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