



Get to Know Your Health Care Team

Getting to know your health care team helps you get the best care possible.

The members of your health care team include:

- You
- Family or friends, as you wish
- Different types of doctors and nurses
- Other clinical providers and hospital staff

When they enter your room, all hospital staff should tell you their name, what their role is, and what they do. If you don't know who someone is or why he or she is in your room, ask.

You and your family or friends

You are part of your health care team. Doctors and nurses may know more about medicine, but you are the expert on you.

Your family and friends can be a part of your health care team, if you like. At [insert hospital name], families and friends are not visitors but are part of your health care team. They can give you comfort and support. They also can tell your doctors and nurses about your needs and concerns.

Doctors

Attending physicians are in charge of your care.

The attending physician may be your primary doctor, a specialist, or a doctor who works for the hospital. The attending physician is the person responsible for the overall care delivered to patients and usually will come to see you once or twice a day. If you have any questions, the attending physician can answer them.

Name of my attending physician:

Contact information:

[If not a teaching hospital, delete following section.]

Doctors in training have completed medical school and are receiving additional training. They are supervised by the attending physician. They will talk with you about your health, work with you to find the right treatments, and help with routine procedures. There are several different types of doctors in training:

- **Residents** have completed medical school and passed national and State board exams but cannot work on their own without supervision. Most residents complete at least 3 years of training, but some doctors, especially surgeons, complete 6 or 8 years of training.
- **Interns** are first-year residents.
- **Fellows** choose to get advanced training in a specialty. They have completed their residency and have almost all the same responsibilities of the attending physician.



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Nurses

There are different types of nurses who work in the hospital.

Registered nurses (RNs) take care of you at the bedside. They give you medicines, take care of your wounds, and make sure everything is going okay. Registered nurses can help with any questions you have. If they don't have the answers, they will find out and get back to you.

Licensed practical nurses [or licensed vocational nurses (LVNs)] provide basic nursing services. They perform simple medical procedures under the supervision of a doctor or a registered nurse. They give you medicines and take your blood pressure, heart rate, and temperature. They usually have less education than a registered nurse.

Certified nursing assistants help licensed nurses but do not have a license for patient care. Nursing assistants, also called nurse aides, help patients with their basic needs, such as eating, drinking, walking, bathing, and going to the bathroom.

Nurse supervisors are responsible for the nursing care on your unit. Nurse supervisors can be charge nurses or nurse managers.

- **Charge nurses** supervise the bedside nurses on the unit. Charge nurses may also be called shift leaders or clinical team leaders.
- **Nurse managers** supervise charge nurses. They help to make sure that the hospital meets all standards and regulations.

Other clinical providers

Physician assistants are not doctors but are licensed to provide care and are supervised by doctors.

They help doctors by doing many things the doctor does. They talk to you about your health history and symptoms, order lab tests, help with surgery, and write prescriptions.

Advanced practice nurses can take greater responsibility for patient care than other nurses. These nurses have completed training beyond nursing school. They prescribe medicine and help you make treatment decisions. They may also be called clinical nurse practitioners or clinical nurse specialists.

Other clinical providers are pharmacists, lab technicians, dieticians, phlebotomists (someone who is trained to draw blood), physical therapists, occupational therapists, respiratory therapists, and others.

Other members of your health care team

Hospital staff include social workers, case managers, interpreters, patient advocates, patient safety officers, housekeeping staff, librarians, chaplains or clergy, volunteers, admissions staff, and financial staff.

These members of your health care team help with your care in different ways. Ask your nurse if you have questions. Talk with your nurse about whether it would be helpful for you to speak with other hospital staff about your care.