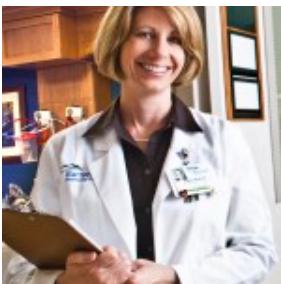


Opinion: Being prepared for a hospital visit

By Dawn Evans

At Barton Health we strive to provide consistently exceptional care for our patients and their families. But what can someone do before a hospital visit is needed or after being released?



Dawn Evans

Here are some safety tips to help you and your loved ones stay safe, healthy, and out of harm's way.

- Focus on balance
More than a third of adults over age 65 fall each year. Injuries from falls can lead to broken bones, bleeding, and even death.

What can you do?

- Improve your balance with exercise. Yoga, cardio activity, and strength exercises help build muscles, activate your core, and improve balance.
- Have your eyes examined regularly and wear corrective glasses or contacts as prescribed.
- Remove any hazards in walkways.
- Be aware of the side effects of medications. The

risk of falling can increase by three times with certain medications.

- Know your meds

Medication errors occur when the wrong medication or correct medication with the wrong dosage are taken. Every year, more than 1.5 million Americans receive the wrong medication, the wrong dose, the wrong form (for example, taking a pill rather than liquid), or take their medication at the wrong time.

What can you do?

- Fill your prescriptions at one pharmacy. Pharmacists are trained to look for drug interactions.

- Tell your pharmacist all the medications, over-the-counter medications, vitamins, herbals, and nutritional supplements you take.

- Know what medications you take and why you take them. This includes prescriptions, over-the counter medications, and other vitamins or supplements.

- Keep a list of the medications you take. Bring it to all medical appointments and have ready if you are admitted to the hospital.

- Become a patient advocate

You are your best advocate when it comes to patient safety. Your healthcare providers want you to speak up and ask questions.

What can you do?

- Write down questions before your appointment. It's easy to get nervous and forget what you want to ask.

- Bring a loved one with you to your appointment. This person can recall and confirm what you heard.

· Become a member of the Patient Family Advisory Council. Advisors represent patients and families of patients that receive care at Barton Hospital. They work closely with hospital doctors, nurses, and administrators to help improve the quality of care for all patients and family members.

March 13 to 19 is the National Patient Safety Awareness Week. For more information about joining the Patient and Family Advisory Council, call 530.543.5537.

Dawns Evans is the patient safety officer at Barton Memorial Hospital.