Patient Safety: Ten Things You Can Do to Be a Safe Patient

What can you do as a patient or loved one of a patient? ***Be informed. Be empowered. Be prepared***.

Here are 10 ways to be a safe patient:

1. **Speak up.**
   Talk to your doctor about any worries you have about your safety and ask them what they are doing to protect you.

2. **Keep hands clean.**
   If you do not see your providers clean their hands, please ask them to do so. Also remind your loved ones and visitors. Washing hands can prevent the spread of germs.

3. Ask if you still need a **central line catheter or urinary catheter**. Leaving a catheter in place too long increases the chances of getting an infection.

4. **Ask your healthcare provider**, "will there be a new needle, new syringe, and a new vial for this procedure or injection?" Healthcare providers should never reuse a needle or syringe on more than one patient.

5. **Be careful with medications**.
   Avoid taking too much medicine by following package directions. Also, to avoid harmful drug interactions, tell your doctor about all the medicines you are taking.

6. **Get Smart about antibiotics**.
   Help prevent antibiotic resistance by taking all your antibiotics as prescribed, and not sharing your antibiotics with other people. Remember that antibiotics don't work against viruses like the ones that cause the common cold.

7. **Prepare for surgery.**
   There are things you can do to reduce your risk of getting a surgical site infection. Talk to your doctor to learn what you should do to prepare for surgery. Let your doctor know about other medical problems you have.

8. **Watch out for *C. diff* (aka *Clostridium difficile*)**.
   Tell your doctor if you have severe diarrhea, especially if you are also taking an antibiotic.

9. **Know the signs and symptoms of infection.**
   Some skin infections, like MRSA, appear as redness, pain, or drainage at an IV catheter site or surgical incision site, and a fever. Tell your doctor if you have these symptoms.

10. **Get your flu shot.**
    Protect yourself against the flu and other complications by getting vaccinated.

References: http://www.cdc.gov/HAI/patientSafety/patient-safety.html

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