

Communicating with Medical and Surgical Teams about a Patient's Treatment and Care A Guide for Relatives



Why is this important?

We know you want to support your loved one and stay informed about their care. This guide explains the steps to follow to ask to speak with a doctor about your loved one's treatment and care.

Who can get information?

- Each person's health information is private. It can only be shared **if your relative gives permission**.
- Only the **Nominated Contact Person** chosen by the patient can ask for updates from the doctor.
- The hospital recommends **one family member** as the main contact to facilitate communication between family members and doctors.

How do I speak to a doctor?

1. Call the hospital's main phone number and ask for the ward where your relative is staying.
 2. Ask for the nurse in charge:
 - They may answer your questions or connect you with the right doctor or nurse.
 3. If you want to speak to a doctor:
 - Tell the nurse in charge and ask them to help you.
 - Say if you prefer a phone call or an in-person meeting.
 - Give your contact details.
 4. Write down your questions before the call or meeting so you don't forget anything.
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What can I ask?

- You can ask any question, but doctors can only share what your relative has agreed to share.
 - Be ready with:
 - Your relative's name.
 - Clear, short questions.
 - Please be patient. Staff may need time to gather information.
 - Be respectful when speaking on the phone—others may overhear.
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When should I ask for updates?

- Key times include:
 - When your relative is admitted.
 - After tests or a new diagnosis.
 - After surgery.
 - When planning the person's discharge from the hospital.
 - Frequent updates may not be possible because patient care always comes first.
 - You will be contacted if your relative's condition worsens or in an emergency.
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Important to Know

- Consent and privacy are always respected.
- Being "next of kin" does not automatically give you access to information.

Further information can be found: <https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/procedures-guidelines/data-protection/sharing-information-with-nominated-contact-person/>

Information about Appointments

- For any problems or concerns regarding out-patient appointments, please phone the secretary to the consultant responsible for your relative's care.
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Useful Details to Keep Handy

Hospital Switchboard 01 410 3000

Ward Name _____

Ward Extension _____

Consultant's name _____

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