



# Northwest Medical Center

A Tradition of Community Healthcare

## Northwest Medical Center – Media Release

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Northwest Medical Center Offers Safety Tips for Patients and Families during National Patient Safety Awareness Week

March 5, 2015 – As National Patient Safety Awareness Week—*United in Safety*—kicks off this week (March 8-14, 2015), Northwest Medical Center is joining forces with hospitals around the country to affirm the critical role patient families play in making hospital stays as safe as possible.

The focus of this year's safety campaign is patient engagement, and emphasizes the importance of the relationship between providers and patients and their families. Enhanced communication begins with an informed and engaged patient and helps to lead to safer care.

"We are taking steps to ensure that we provide the safest possible care in our organization, but there are also things that families and patients can do to be part of these efforts. The family is the most critical part of a patient's caregiving team – so we are encouraging our patients and their families to follow some simple, yet potentially life-saving, tips during National Patient Safety Awareness Week and every day that they visit a hospital," said Northwest Medical Center's Safety Officer, Jenna Gibson.

Tips for patients and families include the following:

1. **BE A PATIENT ADVOCATE FOR YOUR CARE.** Don't be shy. Ask questions about your 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 FAMILY BEST.** Share unique things about your family member with caregivers that may be important for their overall care (i.e. they have a fear of something or only like to eat food cut in small pieces).
3. **WASH.** Wash your 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 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 me."
5. **STAY CLEAN AND DRY.** If you have 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 skin, notify your caregivers. Ask what steps can be taken to prevent harm to the skin.
7. **KNOW THE MEDS.** Ask for the names of the medications you are receiving in the hospital and how they are expected to help you. Caregivers will check your identification band before giving a medication to



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make certain the correct medication is being given. If you don't see this, ask staff to double check that the medication is for you. You might say, "Excuse me, that medication is not familiar to me. Can you please double check it against my chart?"

8. **BE PREPARED WHEN GOING HOME.** When you are ready to go home from the hospital, make certain you know what medications and/or treatments you will need once home. Ask what you should watch for that will require a call to your doctor and which doctor to call if questions come up. Also, ask when you will need to follow up with a physician appointment.

Northwest Medical Center will participate in a variety of activities throughout Patient Safety Awareness Week to enhance focus on patient safety. Although the organization is using this week in March to celebrate patient safety achievements and increase awareness, safe care is Northwest Medical Center's focus, 24-hours a day, 7-days a week, 365-days a year.

For more information on Patient Safety Awareness Week, please call 660-726-3941 or visit [www.northwestmedicalcenter.org](http://www.northwestmedicalcenter.org).

**About-** Northwest Medical Center has provided high-quality health services to residents in Northwest Missouri since 1957. Along with five satellite clinics and a full-service home-health agency, Northwest Medical Center continues its tradition of community healthcare utilizing leading-edge diagnostic equipment and boasting one of the top emergency room facilities in the region.

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