



Fort Carson-MEDDAC News

Dos and Don'ts of Visiting a Patient

By: Amy Kinoff, Department of Nursing

By its very nature, hospitalization is a stressful time for patients, families, and loved ones. Although well intended, visitation can sometimes create as much stress and discomfort as it relieves. Here's some simple do's and don'ts to keep in mind when visiting a patient in the hospital.

Do:

- Communicate with the patients and the staff. Sometimes patients need rest more than they need visitors.
- Check with the nursing staff before entering the patient's room. There may be a procedure underway.
- Listen to the patient when visiting. Fear may be a factor in their experience. Make the visit pleasant. No one wants to hear bad news, especially patients.
- Wash your hands before entering the patient's room and after you leave. This protects both you and the patient.
- Check with staff regarding the appropriateness of gifts, such as plants or flowers. Also, check with staff regarding potential allergies in case your loved one is not in a private room.
- Ask for the hospital's policy on balloons. Some facilities restrict latex while others don't allow balloons at all.
- Inquire about the cell phone policy. Restrictions may apply to certain areas within the hospital. Noise levels may also be of concern to staff and patients.
- Be observant of visiting hours and aware of whether fatigue is taking a toll on the patient. Some patients may feel the need to entertain their visitors.
- Offer to participate in the patient's care. The staff can direct you towards appropriate activities and diversions.
- If the patient is up to it, play a game, cards or a board game.
- With permission and if able, encourage the patient to go for a walk around the nursing floor.

Don'ts:

- If possible, don't bring your young children to the hospital. The hospital is a good place for your child to pick up a bug.
- Don't overstay your visit. The patient is at the hospital for rest and recovery. Ask if you can do for the patient at their home, things like water plants, pick up mail, feed pets, etc. Some people prefer to not have visitors at all. Ask in advance, if possible.
- Don't take offense if asked to step out of the patient's room. Patient privacy may be of concern due to a procedure or other matters.
- If you are sick, stay home.



- Don't bring food. The patient may be on a restricted diet, or in need of surgery.
- Don't eat food in front of the patient. Take it outside of the room.
- Don't expect to be entertained during your visit. The patient may be stressed, sleepy, hungry or anxious. You are there to see how they are doing and what they need.
- Don't wear perfume or cologne. The fragrance can be overwhelming to patients.
- Don't touch medical equipment without permission.

Understanding the importance of practicing good hospital etiquette will make you an important asset in the recovery of your loved one. By following these guidelines, you create a safer environment for yourself, your loved one and other patients.