

CARING FOR ME: PATIENT HANDBOOK

Navigating healthcare in
Hamilton, Haldimand, and
Niagara Northwest

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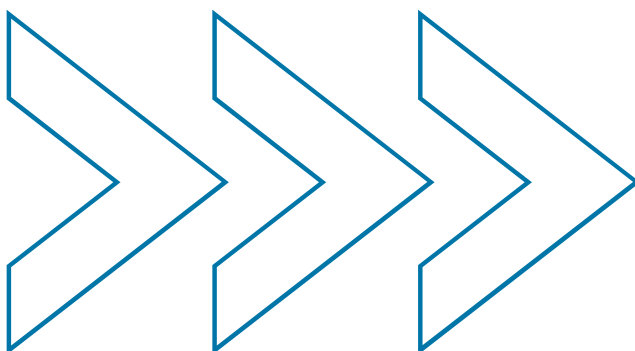
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Introduction

The Greater Hamilton Health Network and the GHHN Patient Family CarePartner Leadership Network co-designed this handbook as an educational guide (tool) to help support patients, families and carepartners in their healthcare journey. Managing treatment planning/care plans such as: appointments, tests, procedures and follow ups can be challenging and difficult. We the GHHN, hope that this educational guide can offer some practical tips and suggestions to help assist with a positive patient experience in your healthcare journey across the GHHN in Hamilton, Haldimand and Niagara Northwest.

Disclaimer

Please be advised the content/information that has been provided in this handbook is for educational purposes only and is not to be used as, or in place of medical advice. Always consult a medical professional or health care provider if you are seeking medical advice, diagnoses or treatment. If you are experiencing a health emergency, please call 9-1-1.

As we continue to work towards developing a more equitable, patient centered health care system we respect that each individual will choose the information they are comfortable to disclose to their healthcare provider(s). This handbook is simply a guide, and some information may not be applicable. Please note that questions may not be answered at your visit due to the need for further tests, procedures, and discussions.



Thank You

The GHHN would like to extend a special thank you to the staff and Patient Advisors who led this project working group. To Ruth Morris, Bonnie Pataran, Janice Duda-Kosar, Angie Tracz, Murray Walz, Anna Burns and Heather Shaw, the GHHN deeply appreciates all your efforts and guidance in creating this handbook. We couldn't have done it without you.



Listen.
Understand.
Validate.
Empower.

General Suggestions

Key Points:

- Keep a list of your symptoms, main concerns and thoughts
- List of medications, allergies, medical alerts (ex blood thinners), current pharmacy information
- Have information on family medical history (ex heart, cancer, diabetes, immunization records even if in a language other than English) as well as your past medical issues/conditions
- If you are able, take pictures of any physical concerns to show your health care provider (ex rashes, swelling)
- Let your provider know the best way to contact you (ex email, cellphone, landline, contact person). Make sure this information is up to date
- If you are unable to express your concerns, have a designated family member/friend to speak on your behalf and take notes during appointment
- Let your health care provider know if you need a Language Interpreter
- Keep in mind that some appointments may be time limited

Ontario Health Card Information - Do you have a card?

Yes – take to appointment and make sure it's not expired

No – apply at: www.ontario.ca/page/apply-ohip-and-get-health-card

SUBSTITUTE DECISION MAKER (SDM)

A Substitute Decision-Maker is a person who makes decisions on your behalf if you are not able to make them yourself. The SDM can make decisions about personal care. Personal care includes health care, nutrition, shelter, clothing, hygiene and safety.

POWER OF ATTORNEY FOR PERSONAL CARE

A power of attorney is a legal document that gives someone you trust the right to make health care decisions for you. This trusted person does not have to be a lawyer.

To learn about appointing someone you trust to make important health care decisions on your behalf, visit:

www.ontario.ca/page/make-power-attorney





Health equity is based on fair and just health, social, and political systems to improve health outcomes. It is the ability for all people to reach their full health potential and receive fair and appropriate care.

Across Hamilton, Haldimand and Niagara Northwest we are working to provide an equitable and seamless continuum of care that actively improves population health while meeting the individual needs of our communities. Part of providing equitable healthcare is taking the time to understand the person you are providing care to/with holistically.

We are working towards developing a more equitable, patient centered healthcare system and respect that sharing the information below is an individual decision.

We encourage individuals to consider (only) if they are comfortable providing the information below to their healthcare provider(s):

- Your first language and or the languages you are comfortable/confident speaking about your health care in (Let your health care provider know if you need a Language Interpreter)
- Your Pronouns and the name you would like to be known as
- Your food or diet needs
- If you participate in Traditional and/or Western medical practices/medicines

Resources

211 Ontario

Find health, community and social service resources by dialling 2-1-1 or by visiting www.211ontario.ca. Their helpline is available 24/7 and service is available in 150+ languages.

If you are concerned about something, feel free to ask your health care team. Respecting and communicating with each other is important throughout the healthcare journey. We invite patients, families, carepartners and providers to work together as partners to ensure the best possible patient care.

Appointment Considerations

Before:

If this is your first appointment with your health care provider

- Bring all current medications or supplements (including herbal and vitamins) in their original packaging
- Bring your medical and family history, including vaccination records, even if in a language other than English
- Consider whether it would be helpful to you to have another family member/caregiver accompany you to appointment
- If you have any accessibility needs (ie impaired vision and/or hearing, cognitive impairments, learning disabilities, mobility or transportation needs) let your provider know
- Ask your health care provider if it is important for treatment planning to have one pharmacy for medication dispensing

REFUGE CLINIC

Refuge specializes in New Immigrant and Refugee health. They offer Primary Care, Specialty Services, and Mental Health Supports.

Visit:

www.newcomerhealth.ca
or call **905-526-0000**.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Public Health Ontario provide expertise in immunization and vaccine-preventable disease control.

Visit:

www.publichealthontario.ca

If this is not your first visit with your health provider

- Providing you have had earlier hospital care, you may be able to view your results ahead of time, you may be able to sign up with EPIC or MyDovetale (see on page 11).
- You can ask to sign up with your community lab to get lab results. There may be a cost for these services.



Appointment Considerations Continued

During:

- Take notes
- Be ready or prepare to give a brief history of why you are at the appointment
- Ask if they are able to tell you what is the most likely cause of your symptoms
- Ask how you can manage your symptoms, what to do if things get worse
- Ask if they have any resources to share for my treatment planning
- Ask if you need any tests along with an explanation and if so, are there any challenges or specific instructions (refer to page 8 for further test preparation)
- Ask about any new medications prescribed and will follow up be required
- Consider and discuss your treatment options
- Ask about any follow up appointment(s), and when they will be scheduled
- Ask what symptoms you should be monitoring
- Share your feelings and concerns



Make sure you understand what happened at your appointment, and what your treatment plan is going forward.

After:

- Keep notes (health care providers names, tests to be done, referrals, symptoms)
- Fill the prescription as advised by your health care provider
- If you wish to review visits or tests done at the hospital, you can do so through patient portals (see page 9)
- If symptoms get worse, contact your health care provider as instructed



Tests, Procedures and Medication



Tests and procedures may be recommended by your health care provider to determine appropriate treatment planning.

Questions to ask:

- Can you explain the test/procedure in simple non-medical language?
- Is there any prior preparation I need to take and who will provide me with this information? (ex fasting, do's and don'ts with medication(s))
- Are there common or serious side effects or risks involved?
- Where will my testing and/or procedures take place, and do I need to make arrangements for a driver?
- How long will it be until I get my test results, and how will I be notified?
- Is it covered by my health card (OHIP)?

Medication:

While in your care journey, you may be prescribed new medication(s) or your existing medication(s) may change. Be sure to inform your care provider of any current medications, over-the-counter drugs, vitamins or supplements you are taking. Ensure you follow instructions provided by your health care provider or pharmacist.

Questions to ask your health care provider or pharmacist about new medication(s):

- What is the name of this medication(s)?
- When and how long will I be taking it?
- How do I take it?
- What side effects should I expect, and should I tell someone about them?
- Should I avoid anything while taking this medication(s)? (ex driving, operating large equipment, alcohol, other medications, and dietary)
- How will I know if my medication(s) is working?
- How should I store my medication(s)?
- Is this covered by my drug plan? If not, what is the cost and do you have any samples you can provide me?



Hospital Stay

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Care in a hospital that requires admission as an inpatient and usually requires an overnight stay.

Before entering the hospital make sure you know:

- What to bring with you
- What time to be there
- Where to register
- Does someone need to come with me?
- Be sure to follow any pre and post op instructions from the hospital

Questions to ask during your hospital stay:

- Who is on my care team and who is the most responsible health provider?
- If I or my caregiver have questions or concerns, who do we contact?
- Is there anything I or my caregiver can do to help in the care during the hospital stay?

If you still have concerns, ask if there is a Patient Experience/ Patient Care Team available.

Things that might benefit the Care Team to know:

- What matters and what is important to me?
- What or who are you most worried about?
- What are my goals of care?
- What are my core beliefs that I would like them to know?
- Are there any challenges that might affect my care?
- My level of function before my illness (daily activities)
- Is there any specific information from earlier health care experiences that might help the health care team?
- Are there any recent tests/consults done prior to admission or specialists involved that might not be in hospital record?
- Review that the medication list is accurate, and staff is aware of any medications not tolerated in the past
- Name the contact person that the team can communicate with
- Do you have a living will? (Visit www.dyingwithdignity.ca)



Care Transitions

Going home from the hospital is a major step in your patient journey and may come with changes.

Before leaving the hospital, discuss with your health care team:

- Will I be contacted from the hospital after discharge regarding next steps? If not, with whom do I follow up with? (ex primary care, specialist)
- When is my estimated date of discharge? (This may change depending on circumstances)
- Who should I contact if there is an issue that arises related to the hospital stay?
- Will I need equipment/supplies/accessibility modifications, and how do I receive them?
- Review medication(s) with hospital staff to be taken after discharge
- Let your health care provider know if you have transportation needs or challenges
- If the need arises in planning discharge you can contact a hospital social worker or home care coordinator



Before leaving, be confident that you and your caregiver understand the plan for your after care. If unclear, ask.

If you are a caregiver:

- If you have concerns about your abilities to provide after care for your loved one, let the hospital team know well before discharge
- Request to be involved in the discharge planning
- Request written contact information for Care Coordinators, or other supports for after care
- Ask where to find other resources about the health issues your loved one is dealing with
- There are supports/resources for caregivers (available on page 11 and 12)



Additional Resources

Patient Portals:

Patient portals give patients safe and secure online access to their personal health information and the ability to manage aspects of their own health care. They also can help patients and clinical teams interact in a more meaningful way to create better patient outcomes. Across the Hamilton, Haldimand and Niagara Northwest regions, patients may find that patient portals have different functionalities, to help you better navigate patient portals and accessing your personal health information, we have provided direct links below:

St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton - MyDovetale

Patient Guide: [MyDovetale - Patient Guide 2022.pdf](#)

Hamilton Health Sciences - MyChart

User guide: [MyChart - Login Page \(hhsc.ca\)](#).

Trying to read and understand test results, such as blood work, can be challenging and difficult. Please reach out to your health care provider, as they can help clarify and explain your test results. If you are interested in researching your diagnosis or test results, we recommend using My Pathology Report (www.mypathologyreport.ca) or The Mayo Clinic (www.mayoclinic.org).

Free Caregiver Supports:

The Ontario Caregiver Organization (OCO)

Visit www.ontariocaregiver.ca for health care, physical and emotional support for caregivers. You may also call their 24/7 helpline at 1-833-416-2273.

Young Caregivers Association (YCA)

YCA offers free programs, services, and support for young caregivers ages 5 to 25. Visit www.youngcaregivers.ca to enroll or call 905-397-4201.



Free Additional Resources and Supports Continued

Health811

Talk to a registered nurse — day or night — for free, secure and confidential health advice. Call 8-1-1 or visit www.healthconnectontario.health.gov.on.ca.

211 Ontario

Find Community and Social Resources by visiting www.211ontario.ca or by calling 2-1-1.

ConnexOntario

Find mental health, addictions, and problem gambling services in Ontario by visiting www.connexontario.ca or call 1-866-531-2600.

The Greater Hamilton Health Network - Patient Booking

A 24/7 secure online booking platform for patients and their caregivers in Hamilton, Haldimand and Niagara Northwest to request or directly schedule appointments with their primary care clinician using a desktop or mobile device, visit www.greaterhamiltonhealthnetwork.ca/patient-booking/.

The Greater Hamilton Health Network – Find Services

Search for services and resources in Hamilton, Haldimand and Niagara Northwest by visiting: www.greaterhamiltonhealthnetwork.ca/find-services/.



Learning From Your Experience

Ask your health care team or provider if there are opportunities to provide feedback on your health care journey or become involved in patient engagement opportunities. Your feedback can help contribute to a patient centered approach to health care.

The Greater Hamilton Health Network

The Greater Hamilton Health Network (GHHN) is one of the first Ontario Health Teams across the province, with a purpose of transforming healthcare in partnership with patients, families, carepartners, primary care, local organizations, and the community.

To join our newsletter email: info@ghhn.ca.

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greaterhamiltonhealthnetwork.ca



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