

# Communication in the Emergency Department

## Patients

Emergency Department (ED) visits can be scary. The ED can also be noisy and busy, making communication even more difficult than usual. It is very important that you and your nurses and doctors understand each other.

A **Communication Access Plan (CAP)** will help you get the services you need so you can understand what is being said.

By law, the hospital must give services to you, your family, and your caregivers to help with communication so you can understand your treatment options, make good decisions, and receive the best and safest care possible. You cannot be asked to pay for aids or services used during your Emergency Department visit.

### Triage/Registration

- Tell staff you are hard of hearing or deaf.
- Ask staff to look directly at you when speaking.
- Ask for the aids and services you need so you will understand all information.
- Ask that your CAP be included in your Electronic Medical Record or paper chart.
- Ask for a copy of the questions that will be asked during registration.
- Remind staff you will not hear your name when it is called. Ask how they will let you know it is time for you to be seen:
  - Vibrating pager
  - Staff person will come to you
- Ask that a sticker with a symbol showing you are hard of hearing or deaf be placed on your wristband or ask if a second wristband can be used to show your hearing status.
- Ask questions and make sure you get them all answered.
- Repeat back information to make sure you have understood.
- Ask a family member, caregiver, or friend to help if you cannot manage communication even with aids and services.

### Treatment Area/Bedside

- Ask to have a sign posted over your bed that shows you are hard of hearing or deaf.
- Ask to wear your hearing aid(s) or cochlear implant(s) while in the Emergency Department. If this is not possible, ask that device(s) be put into a container with your name on it or given to a family member or friend.
- Tell staff the best way to get your attention.
- Ask staff their name and role (nurse, doctor, etc.) or ask to see their ID badge.
- Ask for printed or clearly written information whenever possible.

## Tests, Procedures, Surgery

- Ask your doctor if the anesthesia (medicine to put you to sleep or numb part of your body) or other medicines can make your hearing, balance, or tinnitus worse.
- Ask for a printed or written step-by-step explanation of what is going to be done.
- Ask all questions before staff put on their surgical masks.
- If you will be awake during a procedure, discuss with staff how they will communicate with you.

### Examples:

- Dry erase board (whiteboard)
  - Turning lights on and off
  - Gently tapping you on the shoulder
- 
- If you have a cochlear implant, ask your doctor if it is safe to have an MRI.
  - Before having an MRI, ask for earplugs, a headset, or both to protect your hearing.

## Leaving the Emergency Department (Discharge and Follow-up)

- Be sure to get all information and instructions in writing before you leave the Emergency Department.