



How to Protect Yourself From **Medical Harm** Organizers Guide

V 2.1.3

Consumer Reports Community Workshops

Thank you for volunteering to host a workshop on medical harm!

The purpose of this workshop is to provide attendees with tips on how to protect themselves from medical harm while being treated at a hospital, a doctor's office, or an outpatient medical center, and to be a more informed healthcare consumer.

For over 80 years, Consumer Reports has been dedicated to working side by side with consumers for truth, transparency, and fairness among products and retailers. As we shift toward a world where many experiences and services are being viewed as consumer products, new concerns are emerging.

Consumer Reports is dedicated to bringing the power back to consumers and having them feel in control of their lives, from the food they eat to the healthcare they consume. But we can't do it alone. That is why Consumer Reports relies on its community (that's you!) to help us to inform and empower citizens across the nation about how to protect themselves in a hospital setting. We can't say this enough: Thank you for helping us to create a more informed and safer world.

Introduction to the Organizer Guide

We know that running an event can be hard. We also know that talking about healthcare can be confusing and emotional. We don't expect you to be an expert in either of these things! We've created this guide to help you feel prepared regardless of your previous experience. Read the guide carefully to capture the tips, tricks, and trusted methods we've listed that are sure to make your event effective and fun for all those involved.

In this guide there are multiple activities that teach about how to ask good questions of your doctor, protect yourself from infections, and track your medications. Activities have suggested times and step-by-step instructions to help you facilitate the workshop. The instructions are meant to act as a framework and can be adjusted to make the event feel more natural. Make the content your own. So *don't* use it like a script, and *do* make it personable and discussion-based. We estimate that the entire module will take 80 minutes to complete, but we recommend adding a break and adjusting times where needed.

If at any point you need additional support organizing your event or teaching activities, contact the CR team at community@cr.consumer.org. We are here to help you every step of the way.

Additional Documents

Participant workbook: The participant workbook should be given to every participant in your workshop and will serve as their activity book. The workbook also contains a glossary of key terms.

PowerPoint presentation: This PowerPoint contains the complete run of show, key points, and visual aids. This is optional, and you are not required to use this presentation.

Organizer toolkit: The Toolkit contains details on how to organize and facilitate your workshop, as well as links and templates that can be easily adapted.

Welcome and Introduction

SUMMARY	Facilitators will introduce the workshop and an icebreaker activity.
OBJECTIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Introduce facilitator(s) and participants. → Set ground rules. → Hold an icebreaker discussion.
ESTIMATED TIME	20 minutes
ACTIVITY TYPE	Group discussion

STEP 1: Introductions



SLIDES 2 to 5

5 minutes

- Welcome participants to the workshop and introduce yourself. Participants should also introduce themselves at this time.
- Discuss why you have organized this event and what medical harm means to you. *(Note: This should be and feel personal; make sure participants know why **you** care about this topic. If you need help, use the statistics that we've gathered below.)*
- Explain what Consumer Reports is and why it cares about this issue.
- Review the agenda for the day and share why the topic you chose is important—what are the threats and issues we face because of it?
- Describe the goals for the workshop. It is helpful to list other topics covered in other modules (such as digital privacy and sustainable diet).

☐ Why Medical Harm?

- The purpose of the workshop is to provide participants with tips on how to plan for a stay in or visit to a medical facility.

- An estimated 250,000 Americans a year die from medical errors in hospitals—things such as preventable infections, drug errors, mistaken diagnoses, and poor communication, especially during discharge.
- Every year, an estimated 648,000 people in the U.S. develop infections during a hospital stay, and about 75,000 die, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- Additional readings can be found at [the end of this document](#).

Workshop Goals

The goal of these community workshops is to:

- Discuss important consumer information on a variety of topics—today, we’re here to talk about medical harm and how people interact with healthcare providers.
- Share how you can also run these workshops in other community settings.
- Have fun!

For 80 years, Consumer Reports has worked with you to make the marketplace fairer and more transparent by providing objective, evidence-based advice through Consumer Reports magazine.

In addition to providing advice on products and services, Consumer Reports has fought—and won—some major advocacy battles that have improved the lives of people in this country.

STEP 2: Ground Rules



SLIDE 6

 5 minutes

- Discuss the importance of ground rules at events.
- Share a list of ground rules that will allow for an open, safe, and fun environment.
- Ask participants whether they have questions or wish to add to the ground rules.

Importance of Ground Rules

- It is important to set ground rules at events because it helps us shape how we will collaborate with each other and create a shared space where everyone feels open to contributing.
- Topics, especially health, can be very personal, and attendees can have a range of experiences, including some negative or conflicting ones.

Sample Ground Rules

- Listen actively—respect others when they are talking.
- We are all here to learn. Everyone’s opinion is valid and important. There are no bad ideas.
- The conversation is not meant to discredit any person, organization, group, demographic, or gender.
- Topics like medical harm can be difficult for many reasons. Talk from your own experience and be open and empathic to others’ opinions.
- Share stories and information you are comfortable with.
- The intent is to participate to our full capabilities and work together.

STEP 3: Icebreaker

**SLIDE 7****WORKBOOK 1** 10 minutes

- Instruct participants to get into pairs, preferably with someone they don’t know.
- Ask the pairs to discuss answers to each question.
- Bring the group back together for a quick debrief and invite participants to share highlights of their answers if they feel comfortable.

Questions

- Why did you come to today’s workshop?
- What does “patient centered” healthcare mean to you?

Understanding Your Test, Treatment, or Procedure

Activity 1: The 5 Questions

SUMMARY	Provide background information on the importance of communication between doctors and patients and lead participants in a role-playing activity.
OBJECTIVE	→ Practice asking the right questions when a test, treatment, or procedure is recommended.
ESTIMATED TIME	20 minutes
AUDIENCE	Beginner level
ACTIVITY TYPE	Group discussion
MATERIALS	Pens and internet-connected devices (computers or smartphones)

STEP 1: Know the Problem



SLIDES 8 and 9



WORKBOOK 2

5 minutes

- Introduce the idea of miscommunication between doctors and patients.
- Have participants read page 2 in their workbooks, about the Yale School of Medicine.
- As a group, discuss the challenges to communication with their doctors. The tendency here can be toward complaints, but the goal is not to demonize all doctors—rather to note that there is a gap in what patients and doctors think is happening.

? Questions

- What do you think the underlying issue is here?
 - CR feels that poor communication as the underlying issue.

- What have you tried that has worked to open up good communication with your doctor?

STEP 2: 5 Questions to Ask Your Doctor Before You Get Any Test, Treatment, or Procedure



SLIDES 10 and 11



WORKBOOK 3 and 4

 10 minutes

- To facilitate communication, Consumer Reports (in conjunction with other groups) recommends that you have five questions that you ask your doctor before any test, treatment, or procedure.
- Ask participants to read through the questions in their workbook or aloud from the slides.
- Ask participants to partner up with someone they do not know and use their workbooks to do a short role-play. One person should be the patient, and the other should be the doctor. Emphasise that the goal is to practice using these questions so that they feel less intimidating in the actual medical setting.
- Some attendees might not be excited about the role-play. You can demonstrate asking the questions or being the doctor. Read the room and see what they need!

Resource: The 5 Questions

- 1. Do I really need this test or procedure?** Medical tests help you and your doctor or other health provider decide how to treat a problem. And medical procedures help to treat it.
- 2. What are the risks?** Will there be side effects? What are the chances of getting results that aren't accurate? Could that lead to more testing or another procedure?
- 3. Are there simpler, safer options?** Sometimes all you need to do is make lifestyle changes, such as eating healthier foods and exercising more.
- 4. What happens if I don't do anything?** Ask whether your condition might get worse—or better—if you don't have the test or procedure right away.
- 5. How much does it cost?** Ask whether there are less expensive tests, treatments, or procedures, what your insurance may cover, and about generic drugs instead of brand-name medications.

STEP 3: Debrief



SLIDE 12

 3 minutes



WORKBOOK 4

- Debrief after the role-play.
- Discuss with the group whether they feel these questions would be useful, and how they plan to use them.

Questions

- How did it feel to ask those questions?
- Why do you feel it may be difficult for people to press their doctor with more questions (even if you find it easy)?
- Do any of you have a success story that you would like to share about communicating with your doctor?

Activity 2: Safeguarding Against Infections

SUMMARY	Provide information on preventing infections in hospitals via a role-playing activity with the facilitator.
OBJECTIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Identify improper sanitary protocol in medical spaces. → Practice correcting medical providers when they use an improper protocol.
ESTIMATED TIME	15 minutes
AUDIENCE	Beginner level
ACTIVITY TYPE	Role-playing
MATERIAL	Imagination

STEP 1: Introduce Preventing Infections



SLIDES 13 and 14

5 minutes



WORKBOOK 5

- Ask participants about their experiences with hospital infections.
- Play the “How to Not Get Sicker in the Hospital” video (if you have the proper equipment).
- Explain why it’s important to be aware of improper sanitary protocols and the importance of speaking up to medical staff.
- Have people read from “15 Tips for Preventing Infections in the Hospital.”

☐ Infection Rate Statistics

- According to CDC, research on the leading causes of death in the U.S., hospital-acquired infections would be No. 8 if they were counted among other causes.
- According to Consumer Reports’ research, most people are not willing to speak up when they feel that a medical provider has done something wrong, such as not washing his or her hands before approaching you.

Additional reading: [15 Tips for Preventing Infections in the Hospital](#)

? Sample prompts

- Have you ever contracted an infection from being in a hospital?
- Do you know of anyone who has?

STEP 2: Practicing Preventing Infections



SLIDE 15

5 minutes



WORKBOOK 5 and 6

- Act out the scenarios below, in which a provider is not following proper protocol. Ask participants to stop the role-play when they see something problematic, then ask them what went wrong.

□ Role-Play Scenarios

Scenario one: Doctor not washing hands.

The goal of this scenario is for you to demonstrate the doctor making mistakes, and to have your volunteer (or the audience at large) point out and then correct the mistakes.

Ask for a single brave volunteer from your participants to be the patient. Set up two chairs—one for the volunteer (the patient) and one for the facilitator (the doctor). Set up an imaginary patient room. If you have a whiteboard, a chalkboard, or tablet paper, you can draw where a door, a hand-sanitizing station, a sink, and gloves would be. If not, simply ask participants to imagine where these things might be. Feel free to practice this scenario with several volunteers. As facilitator, you should play the doctor in this scenario.

- Doctor walks into patient room and greets the patient (without pretending to wash his or her hands).
- Doctor acknowledges the symptom—"I understand that you have been suffering from a high fever for several days."
- The doctor asks the patient to open his or her mouth and say, "Aaaaaah" (without pretending to put on gloves).

- If the patient does not correct, ask for help from the audience, or ask a question about hand-washing or gloves.

Scenario two: Messy room.

The goal of this scenario is for you to practice speaking up when something feels off about your hospital accommodations.

Ask for a single brave volunteer from your participants to be the patient and one to be the advocate. If you have a whiteboard, a chalkboard, or tablet paper, you can draw some mess in the room. Feel free to practice this scenario with several volunteers. As facilitator, you should play the hospital staff member in this scenario. You can show this sentence to the advocate:

You and the patient walk into a post-op recovery room. You notice a couple of blood splatters on the railings, some paper towels thrown on the floor, and an overfilled trash can.

- Hospital staff member escorts patient and advocate into the room.
- The advocate is then on the spot!

Debrief: Explain what was written on the scenario, and ask for feedback from the rest of the group.

STEP 3: Debrief



SLIDE 16

3 minutes



WORKBOOK 6

→ Debrief after the role-play.

? Questions

- Is this something that you think you can do? Why or why not?
- Do any of you have examples of moments when you feel medical providers did not follow proper sanitation protocols? How did you handle this?

Activity 3: Keeping Track of Your Medications

SUMMARY	A crowdsourced exercise of different ways participants keep track of their medications.
OBJECTIVE	→ Discuss and recommend tips and tricks for tracking medications.
ESTIMATED TIME	10 minutes
AUDIENCE	Beginner level
ACTIVITY TYPE	Group discussion
MATERIAL	Pens

STEP 1: Why Track Medications?



SLIDES 17 to 19



WORKBOOK 7 and 8

5 minutes

- Discuss the importance of tracking medications.
- Ask participants to spend 5 minutes on page 7 of their workbook, writing down the medications they take.

☐ Importance of Keeping Track of Medications

- When asked about what hospital patients could do to ensure better care, 87 percent of the nurses that Consumer Reports surveyed said that bringing a list of their drugs would be helpful.
- Certain combinations of drugs could create adverse reactions—some drugs don't combine well. So if you are taking many medications, you should ask about this.
- If you are taking a lot of medications, see whether there is something else your doctor could recommend to stop one or more of them (such as exercise and diet).

Additional reading: [Consumer Reports on Health, Volume 22 Number 11](#)

STEP 2: Managing Multiple Drugs



SLIDE 20

5 minutes



WORKBOOK 7 and 8

- Have participants read pages 7 and 8 in their workbooks, where they'll find the five questions to ask about each drug.
- Probe for whether people know the answers to each question for each drug they've written down.

5 Questions to Ask About Each Drug You Take

Consumer Reports recommends that you review all your drugs with your doctor every six to 12 months. The best way to make sure you are taking the right drugs is to review all your drugs with your primary care doctor, but you should also review your drugs with your specialists.

1. **Do I still need this drug?** Each of your drugs was prescribed for a specific problem. If you no longer have that problem, ask your doctor about stopping the drug.
2. **Does this drug do the same thing as another drug I take?** This can happen because you got similar drugs from different doctors. Or you may take a brand-name and a generic drug that do the same thing. You might not need both drugs.
3. **Should I still be taking the drug?** Make sure you are not taking a drug longer than you need to. For example, if you take a proton pump inhibitor (PPI) such as Prevacid or Prilosec for heartburn, you can usually stop after six months. There are some drugs, like pain medicines, that you should use only for a short period of time.
4. **Is there anything I can do instead of taking this drug?** There may be drugs that you should not take if you are older. This is because the body processes drugs differently as we age. Or you may be taking a drug that is not safe because the doctor who prescribed it did not know all your health issues.
5. **Does this drug interact with any other drug I am taking?** Drug interactions can cause several problems. One or more of the drugs may be less effective. You may have more side effects. Mixing drugs, vitamins, and herbs can also cause problems. For example, some drugs are less effective if you are also taking iron supplements.

STEP 3: Share Tactics



SLIDE 21

 5 minutes



WORKBOOK 8

- Have participants share tactics that they use to track their medications.
- Record these tactics (if possible) so that the group can see them.

? Questions

- Why do you think keeping track of medication is important in and out of the hospital?
- What are some ways you and your family keep track of medications?

Conclusion

PAGE 20 OF PRESENTATION	
SUMMARY	Close out your workshop with one final reflection.
OBJECTIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Discuss what participants are taking away from the workshop. → Share what participants can expect after the workshop.
ESTIMATED TIME	10 minutes
ACTIVITY TYPE	Group discussion

STEP 1: Final Comments



SLIDES 22 and 23

5 minutes



WORKBOOK 9

- If your group is small, have everyone go around in a circle and comment on something they learned, found interesting, or will do differently as a result of the workshop.
- If you have a large group, ask individuals to break off into pairs and discuss their reflections with another person. Bring the group back together and ask whether anyone wants to share what was discussed.
- Encourage the group to share any outstanding questions or comments.

? Suggested Prompts

- What is one thing you will take away from the workshop?
- What, if anything, can you apply to your life and your (or your family's) medical care *tomorrow*?

STEP 2: Next Steps

**SLIDE 24**

5 minutes

- Discuss what happens after the workshop. Is another workshop scheduled? Where can people go for more information?
- Share ways you plan on following up with individuals—what can they expect in a post-event email? Every guide comes with links that can be shared in your email; be sure to highlight these articles now and include them in your email.
- **Bonus:** As optional homework, invite participants to fill out the homework in the workbook, committing to trying out the five questions at their next doctor's visit.

Resources and Links

The resources and links below are to aid your workshop. They might be helpful for you to review before the workshop and learn more about the topic, or you can share them with participants during the workshop or even send to participants after the workshop.

Additional Resources

ARTICLE: Medical Errors Are the 3rd Leading Cause of Death in the U.S. (2016)
<https://www.consumerreports.org/doctors-hospitals/medical-errors-third-leading-cause-of-death/>

ARTICLE: How Your Hospital Can Make You Sick
<https://www.consumerreports.org/cro/health/hospital-acquired-infections/index.htm>

ARTICLE: ABIM Foundation Choosing Wisely Campaign
<http://abimfoundation.org/what-we-do/choosing-wisely>

ARTICLE: 5 Questions to Ask Your Doctor
http://www.choosingwisely.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/5-Questions-Poster_8.5x11-Eng.pdf

ARTICLE: Consumer Reports on Health, Volume 22 Number 11
https://drive.google.com/open?id=1X0ZievdEqvdEgpBU74uZzDLvZ0ALJ_zR

ARTICLE: Additional Materials for Patients (English and Spanish)

<http://www.choosingwisely.org/getting-started/resource-library/additional-materials-for-patients/>

Article: From Pill Organizers to Apps, How to Manage Your Meds

<https://www.consumerreports.org/prescription-drugs/from-pill-organizers-to-apps-how-to-manage-your-meds/>

Additional reading: [15 Tips for Preventing Infections in the Hospital](#)