When a Medical Hold is Needed

A medical hold is a doctor’s order used to keep a patient in the hospital if the patient:

- Lacks the ability to understand, make decisions, or apply health information to their condition
- Unable to communicate their health decisions
- May cause injury or harm to self or others
- Tries to leave against the advice of the doctor

The doctor will talk to the person who has the legal ability to make decisions for the patient about the need for a medical hold, such as the patient’s:

- Legal guardian
- Health care power of attorney
- Legal next of kin

Causes of Loss of Decision Making

A patient may lack the ability to make decisions because he or she:

- Is confused or having problems with memory or thinking
- Has behavior changes
- Has health problems such as brain injury, Alzheimer’s disease or dementia
- Has side effects of certain treatments and medicines

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Learn more about your health care.
The doctor and health care team will check the patient’s decision making ability **regularly** and update you on any changes that occur. If the medical hold order is no longer needed, the order will be stopped.

**Safety Plan**

Only a doctor can decide if a medical hold is needed due to a lack of decision making. A medical hold order will include a safety plan to help keep the patient safe.

- A purple hospital gown is given for the patient to wear. Personal clothing may be removed from the room.
- A photo is taken of the patient to keep in the medical record.
- The patient may be placed in a room closer to the nursing station and away from doors and elevators.
- Other things may be used for safety, based on the needs of the patient.

**How You Can Help**

- If you are staying at the hospital with the patient, tell the health care team if you think the person may try to leave the hospital.
- **If you are the patient’s advocate, always tell the staff** you will be leaving before you leave the patient’s room.
- Bring in favorite pictures, books, music or games to make the room comfortable.
- Keep the call light, bed controls, glasses and other items used often within easy reach of the patient.
- Talk with the patient to help reduce his or her anxiety or stress.
- Share your questions and concerns with the health care team.

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have any questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.