



# Am I Safe?

## Safety Conversation Guide

For Regulated Health Care Providers

Ensuring safe and effective care for your patients will enable them to live safely and independently in their own home. This **SAFE** conversation guide will support you in initiating a two-way conversation with your patients and their caregivers about safety in the home.

- ✓ **SHARE** your risk and safety assessment.
- ✓ **ASK QUESTIONS** to understand your patient's perspectives and how they impact their safety.
- ✓ **FACILITATE** informed decision making through active communication.
- ✓ **EVALUATE** progress and continue conversations about safety in the home.

### 1. SHARE YOUR ASSESSMENT

Frame your conversation in a positive way – discuss safety not risk. Focus on fact-based information gathered from risk and safety assessments. Share specific examples from your observations.

- TIPS!**
- Ask if the patient would like to have a family member or other person involved in the conversation.
  - Explain that the conversation is about maximizing their safety and independence.
  - Be as straightforward as possible. Speak clearly and avoid medical jargon.
  - Remain open-minded to a patient's right to choose; keep your personal values on safety out of the conversation.

### 2. ASK QUESTIONS

Help patients and their caregivers become aware of the following safety considerations.

#### HEALTH STATUS

Medical conditions can impact safety

Patients and their families don't always understand their medical conditions and symptoms and how they impact their safety and well-being.

- How are you managing your condition(s)?
- What are your biggest concerns right now? Is this impacting your safety?
- Have you experienced any changes in memory, mood and physical symptoms?

#### CARE PLAN

Treatment options may present safety concerns

A patient's safety at home can be affected by unintended side effects from medication, treatment plans and assistive devices.

- Have you started or changed any treatments or medications?
- Are you experiencing any side effects from your medications or treatments?
- Do you have any safety concerns about your treatment or care plan?

## LIFESTYLE CHOICES

Behavior and attitudes are linked to safety

Lifestyle choices including tobacco use, alcohol consumption, physical activities, and eating habits all impact a person's safety.

- Are you experiencing any limitations that concern you?
- What are some of the things you do to stay active and healthy?
- Are you interested in learning about your [nutrition need]/[physical activities]?

## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

A safe home environment

Have an open discussion on how to make the home safe.

- Is there anything that has been getting in your way of doing things?
- Do you have any safety concerns right now?
- Could anything be changed to make your home safer?

- TIPS!**
- Encourage conversation by using prompts such as nodding, saying “go on” or “I would like to hear more about that.”
  - Expect emotions and acknowledge them with supportive statements, such as “It seems like this conversation is difficult for you. Can you tell me what is making it difficult?”
  - Repeat back what you’ve been told in your own words to ensure a clear understanding.
  - Gauge your patient’s readiness—and willingness to have a safety conversation.

### 3. FACILITATE INFORMED DECISION MAKING

Make sure your patient has enough information to answer the question “Am I Safe?”

- TIPS!**
- Use the teach-back technique to check for understanding – “To make sure I’ve explained things well, tell me how you understand your situation.”
  - Pose friendly questions: “There are different ways that people can make their life easier and safer at home. Can we spend a few moments talking about what is important to you so that we can plan your care together?”
  - Provide written information about safety concerns and encourage your patient to share with their family members.

### 4. EVALUATE PROGRESS

Always ask yourself “Is my patient safe?” and “Can my patient be safer?” Safety conversations need to happen often. Provide opportunities to continue the conversation in follow-up appointments or calls.

- TIPS!**
- Document and share your actions and observations in the care plan.
  - Encourage all team members, including patients, to voice their concern if they sense or become aware of a safety risk. Use assertive statements to communicate safety risks outlined by “CUS”:
- I am        **C**oncerned  
I am        **U**ncomfortable  
This is a   **S**afety Issue