



## **It's Safe to Ask Background**

The *It's Safe to Ask* Medication Card, launched June 2, 2008 is phase two of the Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety's *It's Safe to Ask* initiative. People can list their medications on the card and carry it with them for convenient, accurate reference in health care settings and in times of emergency.

Launched in January 2007, *It's Safe to Ask* has a simple but powerful message that patient safety can be improved when patients understand the answers to three key questions:

1. What is my health problem?
2. What do I need to do?
3. Why do I need to do this?

The *It's Safe to Ask* Medication Card builds on this principle by encouraging Manitobans to understand and talk about their medications.

### **Purpose:**

*It's Safe to Ask* seeks to proactively improve patient safety by strengthening communication between Manitobans and their health care providers. Manitobans are being encouraged to ask three simple but important questions about their own care. This will help to improve care, make care a positive experience, and help reduce health care errors.

### **Objectives:**

- Empower Manitobans by raising awareness of the three basic questions they should ask health care providers regarding their health issues and concerns;
- Enhance patient safety in Manitoba through stronger communication;
- Encourage Manitobans to develop a new relationship with their health care providers so they can actively engaged in health care decisions;
- Motivate health care providers to embrace the *It's Safe to Ask* messages and encourage their patients to pursue this dialogue as a component of quality health care.

### **Background:**

The Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety (MIPS) has designed the provincial health literacy initiative, *It's Safe to Ask*, for implementation in community and acute care settings. *It's Safe to Ask* will lead to stronger communication between patients and providers, more informed patients, increased awareness about the problem of low health literacy, and will contribute to reduced health care errors and safer outcomes for patients.

Knowledge is critical to quality health and improved health outcomes. A well-informed patient asks questions, seeks to understand and ensures adequate response and action by themselves, their families and their health care providers. Brochures give patients the opportunity to record their health status, additional questions and information received from their health provider. Posters in health settings remind the public that *It's Safe to Ask*. These patient tools are available in 15 languages to assist people with their healthcare visits: Amharic, Arabic, Chinese, Cree, English, Eritrean, French, German, Korean, Oji-cree, Ojibway, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, and Tagalog. Information is presented at a basic reading level. A dedicated website, [www.safetoask.ca](http://www.safetoask.ca) includes posters, brochures, and implementation tips. By March 2007, the initiative had expanded into over 65 sites including community health programs, medical clinics, hospital units, and nursing stations within eight of Manitoba's eleven Regional Health Authorities.

### **PREMIER MEMBERS**