



## **Project Kindness Tip Sheet:** **What To Do When Visiting Patients in the Hospital**

When it comes to visiting someone in the hospital, all one really needs to do is show up energized and ready to listen. The following tips can help you ensure that the experience will be a pleasant one.

Neat and professional attire is expected since you will be visiting patients in the hospital. So, no T-shirts, shorts, flip flops, etc. Your Einstein ID must be visible at all times. No white coats! Your first stop is the Nurse's Station on the designated unit, currently unit 9, to pick up your assigned patients from the nurse manager.

### **1. Respect the Patient's Privacy**

Before entering the patient's room, please knock on the door (even if it is open) and ask if it is okay to enter the room. Proceed until you reach the curtain at which point you should ask permission to visit with the patient. Remember this is a social visit and you are not part of the clinical team. Once at the bedside, introduce yourself as an Einstein medical student participating in Project Kindness. Briefly describe the program and give the patient the card.

### **2. Plan for a Short Social Visit**

Between constant checks for vital signs, medications, and other various procedures, patients generally don't get a lot of rest during their time in the hospital. On average, a 15-20-minute visit is sufficient, sometimes even less.

### **3. Learn the Art of Small Talk**

Listen to the patient and have them lead the topics and conversation. Don't feel the need to make the conversation all about their diagnosis or their time in the hospital. While some would gladly like to have a listening ear, others may want a distraction from the reason why they're in the hospital. Instead, asking them about what they did before they came to the hospital can be a good question to get the conversation started. You will be provided with a **conversation starter** sheet as well.

### **4. Be Considerate of the Hour**

Project Kindness has set a schedule of visiting hours that are convenient for both the patients and the hospital staff. Please be sure to let us know if there will be a change in your schedule. If a patient knows they are getting a visitor, they may be disappointed if no one shows up. Ideally, giving a one-hour notice before you can no longer come in would be preferable. In the future, we hope to make the schedule flexible so that students will be able to sign up for a visit as close to one hour before the scheduled time.

### **5. Let them Sleep**

If the patient you are scheduled to see is sleeping, ask the nurse manager for the name of another patient. If the patient you are visiting looks tired, end the session early. Let them sleep and get some rest. After all, a little rest can do wonders for one's wellbeing.

## **6. Don't Come With an Empty Belly**

The patient's food is for them alone. The food that is given to a patient is catered to their dietary needs/restrictions and sometimes the amount of food that is consumed is recorded.

## **7. Be Aware of Your Surroundings**

Remember, you're in a hospital, and there's always something going on. While the patient you are seeing may be taken care of, a nurse may still need to check in on the patient or a roommate. In any case, be prepared to have to shift around or sit where there's no hospital equipment.

## **8. If You're Sick, Get Well First**

The hospital is already saturated with all kinds of germs and illnesses. Your common cold or flu increases the chances of making the patient you are visiting even sicker. Hand washing is the best prevention.

## **9. Know How to be Helpful**

Be thoughtful whenever you can, but be aware if you seem to be in someone's way or feel the need to rush to a patient's aid if she/he is able and wants to complete the task by her/himself.

## **10. Have Fun**

Big smiles, positive energy, and excitement go a long way. While rest is paramount to the patient's health, positive energy also plays a huge role.

## **11. Concluding Your Visit**

When concluding your visit, thank the patient and ask if there is anything you can do to improve his/her stay. Alert staff of any patient/family concerns or needs. Plan for a return visit if your schedule permits and let the nurse manager know if the patient asks for other student visitors so they can be scheduled.

## **12. Give Us Your Feedback**

Don't forget to provide your feedback and reflections of the visit on the Project Kindness Website.

Need some ice breakers? Check out our conversation openers for ideas to start or stimulate a conversation.