

WWLHINformation

Senior Friendly Hospital Strategy *Frequently Asked Questions*

1. What is a Senior Friendly Hospital?

A senior friendly hospital responds to seniors' physical and mental health needs, promotes good health, is safe, and supports seniors, their families and caregivers to be fully involved in the person's care.

Examples of senior friendly practices and initiatives include protocols for preventing falls, pressure ulcers, and for pain management, as well as helping seniors stay active and avoid physical deterioration. They also include practices that actively involve seniors and their families and caregivers and respond to the diverse language and cultural needs of today's seniors. Modifications to the physical design and environment of hospitals such as adjustable beds and handrails in hallways go a long way in enhancing the safety and comfort of seniors.

2. What is the goal of the Senior Friendly Hospital Strategy?

The primary goal of the Senior Friendly Hospital Strategy is to enhance the care of seniors and reduce their risk of functional decline during a hospital stay.

Senior Friendly Hospital strategy aims to:

- Improve the health, wellbeing and experience of seniors in Ontario hospitals, helping them get back home sooner and healthier.
- Improve seniors' ability to live independently and stay out of hospital.
- Improve the use of health care dollars.
- Help reduce ALC through supporting people to transition to the right place of care after a hospital stay.
- Promote quality improvement initiatives that can be included in hospital Quality Improvement Plans as part of *Excellent Care for All*.

WWLHIN's Senior Friendly Hospital Strategy informs senior leaders in hospitals on how to modify the way care is organized and provided to older patients.

3. What will Ontario hospitals look like as a result of the Senior Friendly Hospital Strategy, and how long will it take to achieve this?

The Senior Friendly Hospital Strategy is a three-year quality improvement strategy that promotes hospital practices that better meet the physical, emotional and psychological needs of older adults across Ontario. The first year is about conducting a current state assessment with respect to senior friendly care across Ontario, and about identifying areas for improvement. The second year is about change and continuous improvement while the third year is about sustaining this change. At the end of the three years, all adult hospitals in Ontario will have adopted the principles of a Senior Friendly Hospital. This means that all hospitals will have initiatives in place to:

- Foster a culture that empowers a setting sensitive to the needs of older adults
- Utilize evidence and best practices in clinical care regarding the physiology and social science of aging
- Ensure appropriate consideration toward emotional and ethical issues in collaboration with older patients and their family caregivers
- Promote the dignity and safety of seniors through an appropriately designed physical environment, which maximizes seniors' capacity for independent function
- Encourage the wellbeing of seniors and maximizes positive outcomes

4. How does this process help the health care system?

The Senior Friendly Hospital Strategy reduces the complications many seniors experience as a result of hospitalization. This will make hospitals a safer place for seniors, while at the same time reducing hospital stays and unnecessary readmissions. The strategy's emphasis on emotional and psychological needs of older adults also means that seniors will have a more satisfying care experience.

5. How "Senior Friendly" are hospitals currently?

The WWLHIN summarizes the results from a self-assessment that all our hospitals have undertaken and identifies the strengths and areas for improvement in WWLHIN hospitals. This report is the first step in a strategy to enhance seniors' care and health outcomes during a hospital stay.

The summary reports show that hospitals have a variety of innovative and successful practices that are improving the health and wellbeing of senior. These include a formal commitment by the senior management and Board to senior friendly care, including senior friendly care elements in job descriptions and performance objectives and protocols and monitoring of risk areas for seniors including pressure ulcers, falls, continence, hydration and adverse drug reactions. Also, it shines a light on where hospitals are falling short including the need for physical environments that meet seniors' needs and better detection and prevention of risks including drug reactions, sleep problems and elder abuse.

6. How many hospitals are going to participate?

All adult hospitals in Ontario are involved. This includes all acute care, rehabilitation and complex continuing care (CCC) hospitals.

7. How does the Senior Friendly Hospital Strategy relate to Ontario's Excellent Care for All Act (ECFAA)?

Excellent Care for All increases hospitals and, in time, all health service providers' accountability for quality improvement and provides new requirements and tools to enhance the quality and safety of care, including publishing Annual Quality Improvement Plans. The Senior Friendly Hospital strategy provides a systematic approach to quality improvement for seniors which complements and directly contributes to the achievement of hospitals' quality improvement goals. Some hospitals incorporated Senior Friendly Hospital initiatives in their annual Quality Improvement Plans.

8. Now that the hospital self-assessments have been completed, what is the next phase in the Senior Friendly Hospital Strategy?

Later this summer, the LHINs will release a provincial report summarizing trends in senior friendly care across Ontario. Starting in 2011/12, hospitals will work together and with LHINs to advance actions to improve seniors care.

By spring 2012, the LHINs and hospitals will all adopt at least one indicator to measure improvements to seniors' care as a result of this Strategy.

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