

# Surgical Safety Checklist

## Frequently Asked Questions for Providers

The following information was adapted in part from the ***Surgical Safety Checklists: A review of medical-legal data*** report produced by the Canadian Medical Protective Association.

### **Q: Why is a Surgical Safety Checklist important?**

Harmful surgical incidents, including wrong site surgeries and retained surgical items, continue to occur in Canada. Appropriate standardization of surgical practice, as in many high-risk industries, will help reduce surgical safety incidents. Surgical Safety Checklist implementation promises to improve team communication and support safer surgical systems of care because it is a team procedure in which every team member has a responsibility to participate and respond. While it is recognized that optimal use of a Surgical Safety Checklist will not prevent all surgical patient safety incidents, it is considered a fundamental step toward enhanced surgical safety.

Experts acknowledge that successful Surgical Safety Checklist implementation addresses team training, dynamics, and communication, and involves all members of the surgical team. Effective strategies include the engagement of leadership and a local “champion,” thoughtful modification of the checklist to local workplace requirements, respectful inter-disciplinary team training, pilot implementation with feedback prior to large-scale training sessions, and feedback to allow for ongoing evaluation and reinforcement.

### **Q: What role do patients play?**

In some cases, patients may be aware of a Surgical Safety Checklist and ask about whether one will be used during their operation. More often, however, this is not something that will be top of mind. In either case, informing the patient that the checklist will be used, and letting them know how it works can provide comfort and piece of mind to both patient and family during a stressful time. Much like the improved communication between surgical team members that comes with use of the checklist, improved communication between providers and their patients can go a long way towards improvement patient safety.

### **Q: Where can I learn more?**

Visit [www.patientsafetyinstitute.ca](http://www.patientsafetyinstitute.ca) and search “surgical safety checklist” to learn more about the checklist, access tools and resources to assist in implementation, and learn from organizations who have already used the checklist.

**Surgical Safety Checklist: Smart for patients. Smart for providers.**