

Guide for Patients: Language Barriers

BACKGROUND

- 1.8 million Torontonians speak a language other than English or French at home.
- Language barriers can be obvious or they can be more subtle.
- Anyone who prefers to be served in another language should request the use of an interpreter.

WE KNOW THAT INDIVIDUALS WITH LANGUAGE BARRIERS HAVE:

- Less access to medical care
- Less trust in their health care provider
- Less likely to take new medicine or take it correctly
- Less likely to come back to see the doctor
- More likely to have complications from medicine taken incorrectly
- More likely to come back to the emergency room for the same problem
- More likely to stay in hospital longer

DISCHARGE IS A TIME WHEN

COMMUNICATION BARRIERS ARE MOST LIKELY TO LEAD TO COMPLICATIONS *:

*According to the 2012 Disparities Solution Center publication 'Improving Patient Safety for Patients with Limited English Proficiency'

Ask for a medical professional interpreter when you communicate with your health-care professionals. Remember that non-trained family or friends who are translating may unknowingly omit important information.
