BASIC MEDICAL SIGN LANGUAGE

PLEASE NOTE: This brochure is to be used as a guide for one-on-one communication. This is only a tool to assist in communication while awaiting the arrival of a qualified/certified sign language interpreter. This resource should not be used in lieu of obtaining an interpreter.
Please note: Some deaf and hard of hearing people communicate by using American Sign Language (ASL). This brochure is designed to assist medical professionals in communicating with deaf and hard of hearing patients, who use ASL, by providing pictorial ASL interpretations of some words and phrases commonly used by the medical profession. This brochure is not intended to replace a qualified/certified sign language interpreter, but can be used in the interim until an interpreter arrives.
COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

When communicating with a deaf or hard of hearing person:

- Get the deaf or hard of hearing person’s attention first (tap gently on the shoulder or wave your hand).

- Establish eye contact with the deaf or hard of hearing person.

- Sign the manual alphabet to fingerspell names and other key words for which there are no signs listed in this brochure.

- Use natural facial expressions, gestures, and pantomime (e.g., negative words accompanied by shaking of the head).

- Speak directly to the deaf or hard of hearing person at a moderate pace while signing.

- Make sure your mouth can be seen.

- Rephrase the sentence if you are not understood.

- When all else fails, write it down or draw a picture.

- Most importantly, remember that patience is a language we can all understand.
BASIC MEDICAL SIGN LANGUAGE

ACHE/PAIN
ADDRESS
ADVISE

ALLERGY
APPOINTMENT

ASPIRIN
ASSIST/HELP
BABY

(WHEN SPELLING, ARM IS IN, NEAR CHEST, WRIST IS STEADY, AND USUALLY ONLY FINGERS MOVING)
MANUAL ALPHABET

A  B  C  D
I  J  K  L
Q  R  S  T
Y  Z

And

BACK  BETTER  BED
BATHROOM  BLOOD  BREATH
CALM DOWN  CAN  CAN'T
CHANGE  CHEST  CHILL/COLD