



When To Use The Call Light

MU Patient Education Series

WHEN TO USE THE CALL LIGHT:

Patient rooms are equipped with call lights. This system allows patients in healthcare settings to alert a staff member of their need for help.

When the button is pressed, a signal alerts staff at the nurse's station and typically the call will be answered by a staff member. Some systems also allow the patient to speak directly to the staff through an intercom system; others simply beep or buzz at the station, requiring a staff member to actually visit the patient's room to determine the patient's needs.

The call button provides the following benefits to patients:

- Enables a patient who is confined to the bed and has no other way of communicating with staff to alert a staff member when they need assistance
- Enables a patient who is able to get out of bed, but may need assistance
- Allows the patient to be confident that their need for assistance will be addressed

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE REASONS A CALL LIGHT IS USED?

Patients will press their call light to alert the staff if they may need any of the following:

- Pain medicine
- Personal needs (toileting, etc.)
- IV issues (machine beeping, etc.)
- Questions about their care



HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE FOR THE STAFF TO ANSWER A PATIENT'S CALL LIGHT?

This will depend on the facility you are in and their policy and procedure. However, some studies indicate that a call answered within 4 minutes is a reasonable expectation.¹

Some facilities perform hourly rounding on their patients. Hourly rounding is defined as each hour a staff member will stop by the patient's room to check on them and address concerns such as pain, toileting, positioning and comfort. Hourly rounding has been known to decrease the use of call lights.

Reference:

1. Tzeng HM. BMC Health Services Research 2010, 10:52.

Available at: <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1472-6963/10/52>. Accessed October 25, 2012.

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