



# Health Education Fact Sheet

*From Nurses for You*

## Nursing Best Practice Guideline

## Putting Patients First

Most people at one time or another will receive help from a nurse – whether it is in a hospital, nursing home, rehabilitation centre, in the home, healthcare centre or through a public health unit.

### *What does it mean when you hear a nurse being called RN or RPN?*

In the province of Ontario, RN refers to Registered Nurses and RPN refers to Registered Practical Nurses. RNs and RPNs are educated from the same body of nursing knowledge; however “RNs study it in greater depth and breadth over a longer period of time and accordingly, are able to provide care in more complex situations” (College of Nurses of Ontario, June 2003).

### *Did you know that there are guiding principles and values that nurses use to guide their practice?*

Nurses support the principles and values that are termed, “patient/client centred care.” A client may be a patient in a hospital, a resident in a long-term care facility, a person or family in the community or an entire community. “Patient/Client Centred Care” means:

- Having equal access to care.
- Respecting and addressing your wishes, concerns, values, priorities, point of view and strengths.
- Caring for you as a human being, not as a problem.
- Following your lead with respect to information giving, decision-making and care in general. You know yourself the best; and you have the right to play an active role in working with the healthcare team to define your goals and how to achieve them.
- Having the right to receive care from the same team of nurses on a regular basis as much as possible.
- Addressing your needs in a timely manner.

*Did you also know that “patient/client centred care” means addressing the needs of the entire family?*

When nurses are providing care to you, they are also interested in the needs of your family. They value your family’s point of view, acknowledge and respect your family’s role in your healthcare and help to create caring relationships. If your family is willing to get involved in your care, it is your choice to say how involved they become. Nurses can support you by providing information, finding resources for you and your family and by assisting you in addressing your unique needs.

*How do nurses put you first?*

Nurses are with people during their pain, illness and death as well as wellness, health and growth. It is important for nurses to maintain a level of self-awareness so that they are able to care for you in a helping manner. Nurses need many key strategies to maintain a positive nurse-patient/client relationship. Some key strategies are:

- Nurses need special knowledge to be aware of and address the types of issues and needs you have. Nursing knowledge comes from research, theories, experience, patients/clients, co-workers and from self-reflection. Knowledge is also gained from studying human relationship fields such as sociology and psychology.
- Nurses need to reflect on their own values, goals and needs and ensure that they do not conflict with those of their clients.
- Nurses use mentors as supports so they can discuss issues and concerns and receive advice.
- Nurses need adequate staff, equipment and access to the latest research findings to ensure healthy work environments.

*Is Nursing a rewarding profession?*

Nursing care is challenging work. However, most nurses are satisfied with their profession and the bond they have with their patients/clients. Their role in putting patients/clients first can be enhanced by healthcare policies and work environments that support “patient/client centred care”.



This information fact sheet is developed as a supplement to the RNAO Nursing Best Practice Guidelines on *Client Centred Care, Establishing Therapeutic Relationships, and Strengthening and Supporting Families Through Expected and Unexpected Life Events*. Their intent is to increase your knowledge and involvement in making decisions about your health. These nursing best practice guidelines are available for public viewing and free download at [www.rnao.org/bestpractices](http://www.rnao.org/bestpractices)



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