Frequently Asked Questions About The Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade

Updated Fall 2026

What is the Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade?

The Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade is an "A," "B," "C," "D," or "F" assigned by The Leapfrog Group to most general hospitals in the U.S. It is the only ratings program focused exclusively on how safe hospitals are for patients. The Safety Grade uses evidence-based patient safety measures, including rates of preventable errors, injuries and infections, and whether hospitals have systems in place to prevent them. Hospital Safety Grades are updated twice annually, in the fall and spring, and are freely available to the public at hospitalsafetygrade.org. The Hospital Safety Grade uses a public, expert-driven methodology, calculated by top experts under the guidance of a National Expert Panel, and is 100% transparent and free to the public.

What is The Leapfrog Group?

The Leapfrog Group is a national nonprofit organization driving a movement for giant leaps forward in the quality and safety of American health care. Since our founding in 2000 by major employers and the Business Roundtable, we have served as the nation's leading independent advocate of health care transparency and patient safety. Leapfrog publishes ratings of hospitals and ambulatory surgery centers to help people make informed, lifesaving decisions about where to seek care, and help employers and other purchasers of health benefits tie those benefits to excellence in safety and quality.

Why should people worry about a hospital's safety? Aren't all hospitals the same?

It is critical to monitor safety before choosing a hospital. Preventable medical errors, accidents, injuries and infections in hospitals kill upwards of 250,000 people every year, the third leading cause of death in the United States. One in four people admitted to a hospital suffers some form of avoidable harm. And not all hospitals are the same; some are much safer than others.

What is the difference between the Leapfrog Hospital Survey and the Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade?

The Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade is a letter grade Leapfrog assigns twice each year to general hospitals in the United States. Most of the data used to calculate the Grade comes from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the federal agency that runs Medicare.

In addition, some of the data used to calculate the Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade comes from The Leapfrog Hospital Survey, an annual voluntary survey in which Leapfrog asks hospitals to report quality and safety data for free, and then publicly reports that information by hospital.

Why are some hospitals reported as "Grade Not Assigned"?

For fall 2026, due to a ruling by a federal court in South Florida, Leapfrog is not assigning Safety Grades to about 450 hospitals that did not participate in the 2025 or 2026 Leapfrog Hospital Survey. These hospitals are reported as Grade Not Assigned (GNA). Leapfrog is pursuing an appeal. The appeal brief and Friends of the Court briefs submitted to the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals are linked on Leapfrog's website.

Commented [MD1]: Let's say "about" that's not the exact number and it should be updated to 2025 or 2026 Survey

Why are some hospitals reported as "Not Graded"?

Some hospitals do not have enough patient safety data available to get a Safety Grade and are reported as "Not Graded." Typically, this is because they have a smaller patient population, and performance measures cannot be calculated.

This is different from the designation "Grade Not Assigned." GNA hospitals may have enough publicly available patient safety data, but due to a ruling by a federal court in South Florida, which Leapfrog is appealing, Leapfrog is not assigning Safety Grades to hospitals that did not participate in the 2025 or 2026 Leapfrog Hospital Survey.

See the full fall 2026 methodology here for a full explanation of why a hospital might not be graded.

Why does my hospital not show up when searched?

CMS does not make data available on every hospital, which means that certain types of hospitals are not eligible for a Safety Grade, including critical access hospitals, long-term care and rehabilitation facilities, mental health facilities, federal hospitals such as VA and Indian Health Service hospitals, some specialty hospitals, including cancer hospitals, free-standing pediatric hospitals and hospitals in U.S. territories. Our experts are studying ways to rate them in the future.

How are measures selected for inclusion in the Safety Grade?

Leapfrog experts and advisors at the Johns Hopkins Armstrong Institute for Patient Safety and Quality regularly review all publicly available measures of safety and the methodology to determine a hospital's Safety Grade. The National Expert Panel regularly convenes to review the methodology for validity and reliability. The scoring methodology is published in detail, and hospitals are given tools to analyze how their own grade was derived.

See the full fall 2026 methodology here for more.

What is a "Straight A" hospital?

“Straight A” hospitals have sustained an “A” Hospital Safety Grade for more than two years. These hospitals are recognized with a special “Straight A” designation on HospitalSafetyGrade.org.

Should patients avoid a “C,” “D,” or “F” hospital? What should people do if the only hospital in their community is a “C,” “D,” or “F”?

The Hospital Safety Grade website gives people free access to all the information used to evaluate each hospital, so they should review the Grade, the underlying data used to calculate it, and other ratings and information to decide where to seek care.

No matter a hospital's grade, patients and families should stay vigilant during a hospital stay, and Leapfrog offers guidance and resources on our website. It helps to communicate your concerns about the grade to hospital leaders, clinicians, and boards, and to request information on what the hospital is doing to improve. Leapfrog has found that these kinds of inquiries have a significant impact on improving hospital performance.

Employers founded The Leapfrog Group in 2000 to improve patient safety. How do employers use the Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade?

Employers use the Hospital Safety Grade in two ways. First, employers educate and inform their employees about the Hospital Safety Grade and the importance of considering patient safety when choosing a hospital. Second, employers structure their health care payments to reward safety excellence. For instance, hospitals with higher grades might earn contract incentives. Visit Leapfrog’s free Employer Value Toolkit website for resources and information on where to start.