



To prevent health care errors, patients are urged to . . .

Speak UP

SPEAK UP IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS, AND IF YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND, ASK AGAIN.

- Your health is too important to worry about being embarrassed if you don't understand something that your doctor or nurse tells you.
- If you are having surgery, ask the doctor to mark the area that is to be operated upon.
- Don't be afraid to tell the nurse or the doctor if you think you are about to receive the wrong medication.
- Don't hesitate to tell the health care professional if you think he or she has confused you with another patient.

PAY ATTENTION TO THE CARE YOU ARE RECEIVING.

MAKE SURE YOU'RE GETTING THE RIGHT TREATMENTS AND MEDICATIONS BY THE RIGHT HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS.

- Tell your nurse or doctor if something doesn't seem right.
- Expect health care workers to introduce themselves when they enter your room.
- Notice whether your caregivers have washed their hands. Hand washing is the most important way to prevent the spread of infections.
- Make sure your nurse or doctor confirms your identity.

EDUCATE YOURSELF ABOUT YOUR DIAGNOSIS, THE MEDICAL TESTS YOU ARE UNDERGOING AND YOUR TREATMENT PLAN.

- Ask your doctor about the specialized training and experience that qualifies him or her to treat your illness.
- Gather information about your condition. Good sources include your doctor, your library, respected web sites and support groups.
- Write down important facts your doctor tells you, so that you can look for additional information later.
- Thoroughly read all medical forms and make sure you understand them before you sign anything. If you don't understand, ask your doctor or nurse to explain them.
- Make sure you are familiar with the operation of any equipment that is being used in your care.

ASK A TRUSTED FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND TO BE YOUR ADVOCATE.

- Your advocate can ask questions that you may not think of while you are under stress.
- Your advocate can also help remember answers to questions you have asked and speak up for you if you can't.
- Make sure this person understands your preferences for care and your wishes concerning resuscitation and life support.
- Make sure your advocate understands the type of care you will need when you get home. Your advocate should know what to look for if your condition is getting worse and whom to call for help.

KNOW WHAT MEDICATIONS YOU TAKE AND WHY YOU TAKE THEM.

SHARE WITH YOUR DOCTOR A LIST OF YOUR CURRENT MEDICINES, VITAMINS, HERBS AND SUPPLEMENTS.

- Make sure the doctor or nurse checks your wristband and asks your name before giving you medicine.
- Ask your doctor or nurse how a new medicine will help you. Ask for written information about it, including its brand and generic names.
- Know what time you normally get a medicine. If you don't get it then, tell your nurse or doctor.
- Tell your nurse or doctor if you don't feel well after receiving a medicine.
- If you're not feeling well enough to ask questions about your medicines, ask a family member or friend to ask questions for you.
- If you receive intravenous (IV) fluids, read the contents of the bags of IV fluids.
- If you are given an IV, ask the nurse how long it should take for the liquid to run out.
- Before you leave the hospital make sure that you understand all of the instructions for the medicines you will need to keep taking.

USE A HOSPITAL THAT HAS UNDERGONE A RIGOROUS ON-SITE EVALUATION AGAINST ESTABLISHED, STATE-OF-THE-ART QUALITY AND SAFETY STANDARDS, SUCH AS THAT PROVIDED BY JCAHO.

- Ask about the health care organization's experience in treating your type of illness.
- If you have more than one hospital to choose from, ask your doctor which one offers the best care for your condition.
- Before leaving the hospital, ask about follow-up care and make sure you understand all instructions.

PARTICIPATE IN ALL DECISIONS ABOUT YOUR TREATMENT.

- You and your doctor should agree on exactly what will be done during each step of your care.
- Know who will be taking care of you.
- Understand that more tests or medications may not always be better. Ask your doctor what a new test or medication is likely to achieve.
- Keep copies of your medical records from previous hospitalizations.



Joint Commission
on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations