

Know what medications you take and why you take them. Medication errors are the most common health care mistake.

- Ask about the purpose of the medication and ask for written information about it. Inquire about the side effects of any medication.
- If you do not recognize a medication, verify that it is for you.
- Make sure you can read the handwriting on any prescription written by your doctor. If you can't read it, the pharmacist may not be able to either.
- Whenever you are going to receive a new medication, tell your doctors and nurses about allergies you have, or negative reactions you have had to medications in the past

Use a hospital, clinic, or surgery center that has undergone rigorous on site evaluation against established, state of the art quality and safety standards.

- Ask about the health care organization's experience in treating your type of illness.

- Ask about which on site evaluations they have undergone. State licensure, Medicare, JCAHO, Baldrige, ISO, and other professional organizations all do onsite evaluation of programs

Participate in all decisions about your treatment. You are the center of the health care team.

- You and your doctor should agree on exactly what will be done during each step of your care.
- Understand that more tests and medications may not always be better. Ask your doctor what a new test or medication is likely to achieve.
- Don't be afraid to seek a second opinion. If you are unsure about the nature of your illness and the best treatment, consult with one or two specialists. The more information you have the more confident you will be in the decisions you make.

If you would like more information about Patient Safety please call our Guest Relations office at 2398.



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SPEAK UP  
FOR  
PATIENT  
SAFETY



How you and your family can help us provide you with the care you deserve....

## SPEAK UP: HELP PREVENT ERRORS IN YOUR CARE

Everyone has a role in making health care safe—physicians, health care executives, nurses, and technicians. Health care organizations across the country are working to make health care safety a priority.

You, as the patient, can play a vital role in making your care safe by becoming an active, involved and informed member of your health care team. To help 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. It is your body and you have the right to know.

- Your health is too important to worry about being embarrassed if you don’t understand something that your health care professional tells you.
- Don’t be afraid to ask about safety. If you are having surgery, ask your doctor to mark the area that is to be operated upon, so that there is no confusion in the operating room

Pay attention to the care you are receiving. Make sure you are getting the right treatments and medications by the right health care professional.

- Tell your nurse or doctor if something doesn’t seem quite right
- 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, that is, checks your wristband and asks your name before he or she administers any medication or treatment.
- Expect health care workers to introduce themselves when entering your room and look for their identification badges.

Educate yourself about your diagnosis, the medical tests you are undergoing and your treatment plan..

- Gather information about your condition. Good sources include your doctor, the library, respected web sites, and support groups.

- Thoroughly read all medical forms and make sure you understand them before you sign anything.
- Ask your doctor about any specialized training and experience that qualifies them to treat your illness

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.
- Ask this person to stay with you when you are hospitalized. You may be able to rest more comfortably and your advocate can help to make sure you get the right medications and treatments.
- Make sure this person understands your preferences for care and your wishes concerning resuscitation and life support.
- Review consents for treatment with your advocate before you sign them and make sure you both know exactly what you are agreeing to.
- Make sure your advocate understands the type of care you will need when you get home.