

## SpeakUP - Help Prevent Errors in Your Care Part 1

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



Everyone has a role in making health care safe. That includes doctors, health care executives, nurses and many health care technicians. Health care organizations all across the country are working to make health care safe. As a patient, you can make your care safer by being an active, involved and informed member of your health care team.

An Institute of Medicine report says that medical mistakes are a serious problem in the health care system. The IOM says that public awareness of the problem is an important step in making things better. The "Speak Up™" program is sponsored by The Joint Commission. They agree that patients should be involved in their own health care. These efforts to increase patient awareness and involvement are also supported by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. This program gives simple advice on how you can help make health care a good experience.



Research shows that patients who take part decisions about their

own health care are more likely to get better faster. To help prevent health care mistakes, patients are urged to "Speak Up."

- Speak up if you have questions or concerns. If you still don't understand, ask again. It's your body and you have a right to know.

- Your health is very important. Do not worry about being embarrassed if you don't understand something that your doctor, nurse or other health care professional tells you.

- If you don't understand because you speak another language, ask for someone who speaks your language. You have the right to get free help from someone who speaks your language.

- Don't be afraid to ask about safety. If you're having surgery, ask the doctor to mark the area that is to be operated on.



- Don't be afraid to tell the nurse or the doctor if you think you are about to get the wrong medicine.

- Don't be afraid to tell a health care professional if you think he or she has confused you with another patient.

- Pay attention to the care you get. Always make sure you're getting the right treatments and medicines by the right health care professionals. Don't assume anything.

- Tell your nurse or doctor if something doesn't seem right.

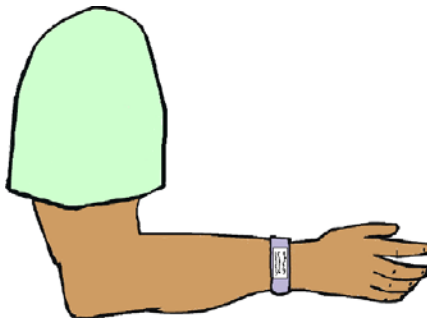


- Expect health care workers to introduce themselves. Look for their identification (ID) badges. A new mother should know the person who she hands her baby to. If you

don't know who the person is, ask for their ID.

- Notice whether your caregivers have washed their hands. Hand washing is the most important way to prevent infections. Don't be afraid to remind a doctor or nurse to do this.
- Know what time of the day you normally get medicine. If you don't get it, tell your nurse or doctor.

- Make sure your nurse or doctor checks your ID. Make sure he or she checks your wristband and asks your name before he or she gives you your medicine or treatment.



- Educate yourself about your illness. Learn about the medical tests you get, and your treatment plan.
- Ask your doctor about the special training and experience that qualifies him or her to treat your illness.

- Look for information about your condition. Good places to get that information are from your doctor, your library, respected websites and support groups.



- Write down important facts your doctor tells you. Ask your doctor if he or she has any written information you can keep.
- 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 know how to work any equipment that is being used in your care. If you use oxygen at home, do not smoke or let anyone smoke near you.

Text from the "SpeakUP" series by the Joint Commission.

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