



## **SPEAK UP** Help Prevent Errors in Your Care

### **SPEAK UP if you have questions or concerns, and if you don't understand, ask again**

Your well being is too important to worry about being embarrassed if you don't understand something that your direct care staff tells you.

Don't be afraid to ask about safety.

Don't be afraid to tell a 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 are getting the right medications by the right health care professionals. Don't assume anything.**

Tell your direct care staff or their supervisor if something docs not seem quite right.

Know what time of day you normally receive a

medication. If it docs not happen, Bring this to the attention of your direct care staff.

Make sure your nurse or doctor con firms your identity. that is, checks your wristband, asks your name, and date of birth bfore he or she administers any medication or treatment.

Ask your nurse if he/she washed their hands before giving your medications or performing and procedures.

Educate yourself about your family: member's or significant other's treatment, care or servlce.

Ask your direct care staff about their qualifications.

Gather information about your, your family member's or significant other's condition or problem from people who have had similar experiences. Good sources include direct care staff, library, respected websites and support groups.

Write down important facts your direct care staff tell you, so that you can look for additional information later. And ask your direct care staff if they have any written information you can keep.

Thoroughly read all forms and make sure you understand them before you sign anything. If you don't understand, ask The staff to explain them.

Make sure you're familiar with the operation of any equipment that is being used in your care. If you will be using oxygen at home, do not smoke or allow anyone to smoke near you while oxygen is in use.

### **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 your questions you have asked, and speak up for you if you cannot.

Review consents for treatment with your advocate before you sign, so you both understand exactly what you are agreeing to.

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 will take and why you take them. Medication errors are the most common health care mistakes.**

Ask about the purpose of the medication and for written information about it including its brand and generic names. Also inquire about

any side effects of the medication .

If you do not recognize the medication, verify that it is for you. If you're not well enough to do this; ask your advocate to do this

Whenever you are going to receive a new medication, tell your doctors about allergies you have, or negative reactions you have had to medications in the past!

If you are taking multiple medications, ask your doctor or pharmacist if it is safe to take those medications together. This holds true for vitamins, herbal supplements and over the counter drugs, too

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.

**USE A behavioral health care facility, program or service 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 behavioral health care facility experience in servicing people with your needs, problems or conditions.

If you have one or more behavioral health care facility or service to choose from, ask your primary care physician which one offers the best care for your condition.

Before you leave the hospital or other facility, ask about follow-up care and make sure you understand all the instructions

Go to Quality Check at [www.jcaho.org](http://www.jcaho.org) to find out whether your hospital or other healthcare organization is accredited.

**PARTICIPATE in all your decisions about your treatment, care or service. You are the center of the behavioral health care team**

You and your direct care staff should agree on exactly what will be done during each step of your care.

Know who will be taking care of you, how long the treatment will last, and the expected goals or outcomes.

Keep copies of your plan of care, treatment or service with you.

Don't be afraid to seek a second opinion. If you are unsure about the nature of your condition and the best treatment, consult with one or two additional specialists. The more information you have about the option available to you, the more confident you will be in decisions made.

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**Everyone has a role in making health care safe – physicians, health care executives, nurses and technicians.**

Healthcare organizations across the country are working to make health care safety a priority. You, as the patient, can also play a vital role in making your care safe by becoming an active, involved and informed member of your health care team.

An Institute of Medicine (IOM) report has identified the occurrence of medical errors as a serious problem in the health care system. The (IOM) recommends, among other things, that a concerted effort be made to improve the public's awareness of the problem.

The "Speak Up" program, sponsored by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, urges patients to get involved in their care. Such efforts to increase consumer awareness and involvement are supported by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. This initiative provides simple advice on how you, as the patient, can make your care a positive experience. After all, research shows that patients who take part in decisions about their health care are more likely to have better outcomes.

Individuals with concerns about patient care and safety in the hospital are encouraged to contact our Patient Advocate. For any unresolved concerns contact the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations [www.jcaho.org](http://www.jcaho.org) or 800-994-6610