

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO MAKE HEALTH CARE SAFER



New medical treatments and cures are achieved every day. New technologies and medications continue to be available. But, medical care is not perfect. Your body and your condition can be very complicated. And, the health system in which you receive care is complex. In the US, our healthcare processes and systems are generally very safe, but accidents do happen.

Whether you're a health consumer at home or a patient in the hospital, your safe care is most important. Ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacists about any risks in your care and treatment, and ask what you can do to help make your care safer.

The National Patient Safety Foundation suggests a number of things you can do to help make your healthcare experience safer:

- Seek information about illness or conditions that affect you. Read up on options and possible treatment plans.
- Choose a doctor, clinic, pharmacy, and hospital experienced in the type of care you require.
- Ask questions of your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or benefits plan coordinator.
- Seek more than one opinion.

KEEP TRACK OF YOUR HISTORY

- Write down your medical history, including any medical conditions you have, illnesses, immunizations, allergies, hospitalizations, all medications and dietary supplements you're taking, and any reactions or sensitivities you've had.
- Write down the names and phone numbers of your doctors, clinics, and pharmacies for quick and easy reference.

WORK WITH YOUR DOCTOR AND OTHER HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS AS A TEAM

- Share your health history with your care team.
- Share up-to-date information about your care with everyone who's treating you.
- Even if it's difficult, talk about sensitive topics, such as sexual problems and sexually transmitted diseases, emotional problems, domestic violence, eating disorders, and substance abuse.
- Make sure you understand the care and treatment you'll be receiving.
- Pay attention. If something doesn't seem right, if a medication is now a different color, or in a different amount, or if a routine has changed, call it to the attention of your doctor or healthcare professional, and verify that it is correct.
- Discuss any concerns about your safety with your care team.

INVOLVE A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER IN YOUR CARE

- If you're not able to observe or participate fully in your care, ask a friend or family member to assist. They can accompany you on appointments or stay with you, and help you to ask questions, understand all instructions, and communicate your preferences.

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FOLLOW YOUR DOCTOR'S DIRECTIONS

- Be sure you receive all instructions in writing, and that you read and understand them, and have them explained verbally.
- Take medications exactly as described.
- Use home medical equipment and supplies only as instructed.
- Report anything unusual to your doctor

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National Patient Safety Foundation

515 North State Street
Chicago, IL 60610
(312) 464-4848
fax: (312) 464-4154
info@npsf.org
www.npsf.org

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What You Can Do to Improve Communication with Your Healthcare Professionals

Reflecting and Planning

Directions: Look at each idea in the brochure. List the things you already do in the first column. In the middle column, list two or three ideas that you plan to try the next time you need health care. In the last column, write anything you don't want to try and also write your reasons. Share your answers with the class.

I already do this	I want to try to do this	I don't want to try to do this, and why I don't want to
