

PARTNERS IN CARE

10 Ways You Can Participate in Your Care

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Your doctors, your nurses, and other members of your health care team are committed to providing safe and excellent care. We encourage you to be involved in your care. A family member or friend may want to help you. That person is called your health care advocate.

Here are 10 ways that you and your health care advocate can make your health care experience safer.

1 Ask questions about your illness or disease. Ask again if you don't understand the answers. Communicating with you is part of your doctor's and nurse's job. Keep a pad and pen at your bedside to write down questions and answers.

2 Ask the names of the medications you are taking and what they are for. Medication errors happen more often than any other type of medical error. Use this medication safety checklist. Write down the answers.

- What medications am I taking?
- What do they look like?
- How much am I getting and how often?
- Are there side effects?
- Does my medication interact with foods or other medications?

3 Ask about safety. If you are having surgery, ask the doctor to mark the area so you can be sure there is no confusion. Ask what to expect after surgery and how you should feel.

4 Ask the names of the doctors and nurses treating you. Members of your health care team will introduce themselves to you. Everyone who works in the hospital also wears an ID badge. Write down the names of your doctors and nurses so you don't have to worry about forgetting. Some even have business cards they can share with you.

5 Tell your doctor or nurse if something doesn't seem right. You know better than anyone else if something seems odd, new, or different. Instead of worrying about it, ask for clarification.

6 Tell your doctor or nurse if you think they have confused you with another patient. If you get called by the wrong name or if what they are saying doesn't sound familiar, tell them.

7 Tell your doctor or nurse if you think you are about to receive the wrong medication or treatment. You may recognize your medications by their name, shape, and color. If medication doesn't look familiar, ask your doctor or nurse before taking it. Also, if you are not familiar with a certain treatment or test, ask what it is for and be sure it is for you.

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8 Tell your doctor and nurse about medication allergies you have had in the past. Tell them what other medications you are taking, including vitamins and alternative or herbal therapies.

9 Tell your doctor or nurse if someone is helping you make health care decisions. Introduce this person to your doctor and nurse and explain how he or she is helping you.

10 Before you leave the hospital, ask your doctor or nurse about follow-up care. Use this follow-up safety checklist.

- What medications do I take and how often?
- What appointments do I have or do I need to make?
- What special things do I have to know about caring for myself?
- What symptoms should I be looking for?

The more people looking out for your health and safety, the better off you will be. Please help us give you and your family the best possible care.

Don't be afraid to speak up. We welcome your questions.

