

A Focus on Patient Safety

Speak Up: It's Your Right



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Every patient and care provider needs to take an active role to make sure health care is safe. Here are some tips that you can use when you or a member of your family has to go to the emergency room or be admitted to the hospital. Don't be afraid to ask questions or to raise a concern. Remember, medical professionals need reminders, too.

Repeat instructions back to your doctor, nurse or case manager. After your doctor or other member of the health care team explains a procedure, medications, symptoms, or other details about your care, repeat it back to him or her in your own words. This will allow them to clarify or further explain things to you and ensure you understand your plan of care.

Ask for your discharge plan before you leave the emergency department or hospital. Before you leave the hospital, your nurse or case manager should provide you with a discharge plan that outlines what you need to do to continue your plan of care. The plan should be as concise as possible and you and your family should understand the next steps in your care. If you have questions, speak up. Also, ask whom you should call in case you or your family has questions once you leave the hospital or emergency department.

Keep a list of your medications. Ask your nurse or case manager for an accurate, up-to-date list of the medications you are taking. Keep it with you and present it to any med-

ical professional you visit. Here is a sample of a medication list from the National Transitions of Care Coalition that you and your family can use: www.ntocc.org/Portals/0/My_Medicine_List.pdf.

Ask your doctor to wash his/her hands. At the beginning of any exam or procedure, ask your doctor or other health care professional if he or she has washed their hands. Also, when you're a patient or visitor in a health care facility, wash your hands or use hand sanitizer regularly. Hand hygiene is one of the most important and effective ways to prevent infections.

Get and keep your test results. If you've had a test done at a clinic or hospital, follow up with your doctor to get the results and keep a copy for yourself. Critical information about medical history, test results, treatments and procedures are often not communicated to everyone who is providing care for a patient. If you have a copy, you can make sure all your doctors know what treatments you have had. This will help the medical team working with you understand the plan of care and avoid repeating tests that you have had.

These are just a few things that you and your family can do as active patients. Don't be afraid to raise concerns or ask questions. It is your right as a patient. CTP