

## Making Your Health Care Safe

### ***You have a role!***

Get involved! Be an active member of your health care team and take part in decisions about your care.

Sometimes, despite everyone's best efforts, errors unfortunately can:

- happen in your home, doctor's office, pharmacy, hospital, or anywhere else in the health care system
- involve problems with tests, equipment, reports, medicines, and other treatments
- happen even during a routine task, such as taking a blood sample

Most errors result from gaps in today's complex health care system. But some errors also happen for other reasons.

### ***Taking Your Medicines***

If possible, use the same pharmacy for all your prescribed and over-the-counter medications.

Make sure that each of your doctors and pharmacists knows about every medicine you take. This includes prescription and over-the-counter medicines, as well as dietary supplements such as vitamins and herbs. At least once a year, show all these products to your doctor, in their packages. This can help avoid any conflicts.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about any allergies and bad reactions you have had to your medicines

### ***When you pick up your medicine at the pharmacy:***

- Ask: "*Is this the medicine that my doctor prescribed?*"
- Make sure that you understand:
  - what your medicine is for;
  - what food, drink, medicines, or activities you should avoid while using it;
  - how to take it properly. (For example, ask if "four times daily" means a dose every 6 hours around the clock, or 4 doses during regular waking hours.)
- If you have to take a liquid medicine, ask your pharmacist for a suitable measuring device and ask how to use it correctly. A household spoon often won't measure the right dose!

If your pharmacist does not give you written information about the medicine's side effects or conflicts with other medicines, ask for it!

### ***Other Steps To Take***

- *Speak up* if you have questions or concerns about any part of your care.
- Make sure that one person, such as your family doctor, is in charge of your care. This is especially important if you have many health problems or are in a hospital.
- Make sure that all professionals involved in your care have important health information about you. Don't just *assume* that they have it.
- Ask a family member or friend to be there with you, to help get things done and speak up for you if you can't.
- If you go for a test, ask how long it will take to get the results. Then, ask your doctor about the results at your next visit. Don't assume that "no news is good news"!
- Learn about your condition and treatments. Ask your doctor and nurse, and use other reliable sources.

**Patient Information Sheet  
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