



TAKING STEPS FOR SAFE HEALTH CARE

Medical errors occur in the health care system and are one of the primary causes of death and injury in the United States.

These errors can involve many things; such as, medication, reports, diet, equipment, or diagnosis. Although government agencies and others are working together to create a safer health care system for the public, there are steps you can take to ensure your health safety.

Where do Medical Errors occur?

Medical errors can happen anywhere you receive health care; for example, your doctor's office, the drug store or pharmacy, outpatient care centers, clinics, even in your own home.

What can you do?

- Take an active part in your health care – discuss your care with your doctor and ask questions.
- Tell your doctor about all the medicine you are taking, including non-prescription medicines; such as, aspirin, vitamins and herbs.
- Remind your doctor of allergies.
- Make sure you can read the prescriptions. If you can't read it, it's possible the pharmacist can't read it.

- Ask for information about your prescriptions; such as, how long to take it, can I eat with it, what is the medicine for?
 - When you pick up your medicine, make sure it is the correct medicine and the pharmacist knows all the prescription and non-prescription medicine you are taking.
 - Get directions on how to take medications, how to measure it, and possible side effects.
- Always ask the doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care worker questions if you don't understand or you have concerns about your care.
 - Don't assume your test is normal if you don't hear anything.
 - Learn about your illness and possible treatments and discuss them with your doctor.
 - If you need surgery, make sure you know exactly what to expect, who will be taking care of you, how long it will take to get better.
 - If you have the option, pick a hospital or facility that frequently performs the surgery you need or frequently treats patients with your illness.
 - More is not always better – ask questions about a test or treatment and how it can or cannot help you.

These are a few suggestions on things “you” can do to stay safe in today's health care. For more information, you may want to visit the following government sponsored websites referenced in this article:

1. [20 Tips to Help Prevent Medical Errors.](#)
2. [Five Steps for Safer Health Care](#)
3. [Using Medications Safely](#)

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