Speak Up™ About Your Care

Speak up...
• If you don’t understand something or if something doesn’t seem right.
• If you speak or read another language and would like an interpreter or translated materials.
• If you need medical forms explained.
• If you think you’re being confused with another patient.
• If you don’t recognize a medicine or think you’re about to get the wrong medicine.
• If you are not getting your medicine or treatment when you should.
• About your allergies and reactions you’ve had to medicines.

Pay attention...
• Check identification (ID) badges worn by doctors, nurses and other staff.
• Check the ID badge of anyone who asks to take your newborn baby.
• Don’t be afraid to remind doctors and nurses to wash their hands.

Educate yourself...
• So you can make well-informed decisions about your care.
• Ask doctors and nurses about their training and experience treating your condition.
• Ask for written information about your condition.
• Find out how long treatment should last, and how you should feel during treatment.
• Ask for instruction on how to use your medical equipment.

Advocates (family members and friends) can help...
• Give advice and support — but they should respect your decisions about the care you want.
• Ask questions, and write down important information and instructions for you.
• Make sure you get the correct medicines and treatments.
• Go over the consent form, so you all understand it.
• Get instructions for follow-up care, and find out who to call if your condition gets worse.

Know about your new medicine...
• Find out how it will help.
• Ask for information about it, including brand and generic names.
• Ask about side effects.
• Find out if it is safe to take with your other medicines and vitamins.
• Ask for a printed prescription if you can’t read the handwriting.
• Read the label on the bag of intravenous (IV) fluid so you know what’s in it and that it is for you.
• Ask how long it will take the IV to run out.

Use a quality health care organization that...
• Has experience taking care of people with your condition.
• Your doctor believes has the best care for your condition.
• Is accredited, meaning it meets certain quality standards.
• Has a culture that values safety and quality, and works every day to improve care.

Participate in all decisions about your care...
• Discuss each step of your care with your doctor.
• Don’t be afraid to get a second or third opinion.
• Share your up-to-date list of medicines and vitamins with doctors and nurses.
• Share copies of your medical records with your health care team.

The goal of Speak Up™ is to help patients and their advocates become active in their care. Speak Up™ materials are intended for the public and have been put into a simplified (i.e., easy-to-read) format to reach a wider audience. They are not meant to be comprehensive statements of standards interpretation or other accreditation requirements, nor are they intended to represent evidence-based clinical practices or clinical practice guidelines. Thus, care should be exercised in using the content of Speak Up™ materials. Speak Up™ materials are available to all health care organizations; their use does not indicate that an organization is accredited by The Joint Commission.