Prevent Errors in Your Child's Care

Your child's health and safety are important to doctors, nurses, and other caregivers. You can make a difference in your child’s care by asking the right questions and being actively involved. This brochure has tips and answers to questions to prevent errors in your child’s care.

What can you do to prepare for your child’s visit to the doctor’s office or hospital?

It’s helpful to write down the following information:

• Your child’s medical history. Include vaccinations, allergies, current health problems, and the dates of any surgeries and hospital visits.
• A list of your child’s medicines. Include prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbs. Include the amounts your child takes.
• Questions you have about your child’s health.

Share this information with your child’s doctor and other caregivers.

What should you ask the doctor?

Find out about all the tests and treatments for your child’s illness or injury. Ask how a treatment will help your child. Understand that more tests or treatments are not always better for your child.

What if you do not understand what the doctor is saying?

Tell the doctor you do not understand. Ask more questions. By asking questions you are helping the doctor understand what you need. Tell the doctor if you need someone who speaks your language.

How can you help prevent your child from getting an infection?

Remind caregivers to wash or clean their hands before touching your child. Handwashing helps prevent infection. Remind caregivers to wear clean gloves when they do tasks such as taking blood, touching wounds or examining your child’s private parts.

The Joint Commission is the largest health care accrediting body in the United States that promotes quality and safety.

Helping health care organizations help patients.

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The Joint Commission

Symptoms that mean you need to take your child to the doctor or hospital immediately:

- A stiff neck
- Fever with a skin rash
- Fever over 100.4 degrees (in child 3 months or younger)
- Burns that are larger than the palm of your child’s hand, or are deep, discolored, or caused by a chemical
- A head injury that causes your child to black out, vomit, or have a headache or be confused. Vomiting, headache, or confusion can develop later.
- Severe stomach pain or stomach that is swollen or tender to touch
- Blood in stool. This could be red or black, tarry looking stools.
- When your instinct tells you something is wrong with your child’s health

The goal of the Speak Up™ program is to help patients become more informed and involved in their health care.