

Be an Active Consumer

3 Questions You Must Ask

Health care information can be confusing. Asking questions helps you understand how to stay well or get better. You should ask 3 questions every time you see a doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

These 3 questions are:

1. What is my main problem?
2. What do I need to do?
3. Why is it important for me to do this?

The Speak Up Initiative

Patients can plan an important role in preventing medical errors by becoming active, involved and informed participants on the health care team. Speak Up™ encourages the public to:

- Speak up if you have questions or concerns, and if you don't understand, ask again. It's your body and you have a right to know.
- Pay attention to the care you are receiving. Make sure you're getting the right treatments and medications by the right health care professionals. Don't assume anything.
- Educate yourself about your diagnosis, the medical tests you are undergoing, and your treatment plan.
- Ask a trusted family member or friend to be your advocate.
- Know what medications you take and why you take them. Medication errors are the most common health care errors.
- Use a hospital, clinic, surgery center, or other type of health care organization that has undergone a rigorous on-site evaluation against established state-of-the-art quality and safety standards, such as that provided by Joint Commission.
- Participate in all decisions about your treatment. You are the center of the health care team.

More information is available at www.jointcommission.org/speakup.aspx

Advance Directives

One of the most powerful actions consumers can take is to take control of their health care decisions before they no longer have the ability to do so. Completing an Advance Directive assures that one's wishes will be followed.

Every adult age 18 or older should:

- Complete a Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care or Living Will
- Discuss health care wishes with family and health care providers.
- Select another person to make health care decisions on his or her behalf if unable

An advance directive is a gift to your family and friends as it makes hard times easier if they know your wishes. Your physician or any member of the health care team will assist you in finding the correct forms and provide assistance with how to complete the forms.