

Medication

■ **Ask the doctor and pharmacist about the medicine.**

Find out the name, benefits, and possible side effects or reactions with other medications or food/beverages.

- **What is it?**

Make sure you know the name and color of the medicine. Take medicine in well-lit areas.

- **What is it for?**

Make sure you know why the medicine is being taken.

- **How do I take it?**

Ask the doctor or pharmacist to explain how to take the medicine and how often it should be taken.

- **What should I look for?**

Ask what the results should be and ask about possible reactions.

- **Double-check your prescription.**

Before you leave the pharmacy, check your medicine to make sure it was prepared for **you**.

Speak up before you leave because pharmacies typically do not take back medicine once it has been purchased.

■ **Discuss previous allergies or reactions.**

Make sure the doctors, nurses and pharmacists know about any allergies or reactions to drugs you might have.



■ **Write it all down.**

Keep an up-to-date list of all your medicines, including over-the-counter, herbal or dietary drugs. Visit the MAPS website, www.mnpatientsafety.org, for a free medicine list form called "My Medicine List."

The Minnesota Alliance for Patient Safety (MAPS) was established in 2000 as a partnership between the Minnesota Hospital Association, the Minnesota Medical Association, and the Minnesota Department of Health. MAPS is a statewide public-private coalition, which includes more than 50 Minnesota health-care organizations working together to improve patient safety practices in the delivery of health care.

References:

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
"20 Tips To Help Prevent Medical Errors"

Institute for Safe Medication Use
"Safety Alerts"

Massachusetts Coalition for the Prevention of Medication Errors
"Your Role in Safe Medication Use"

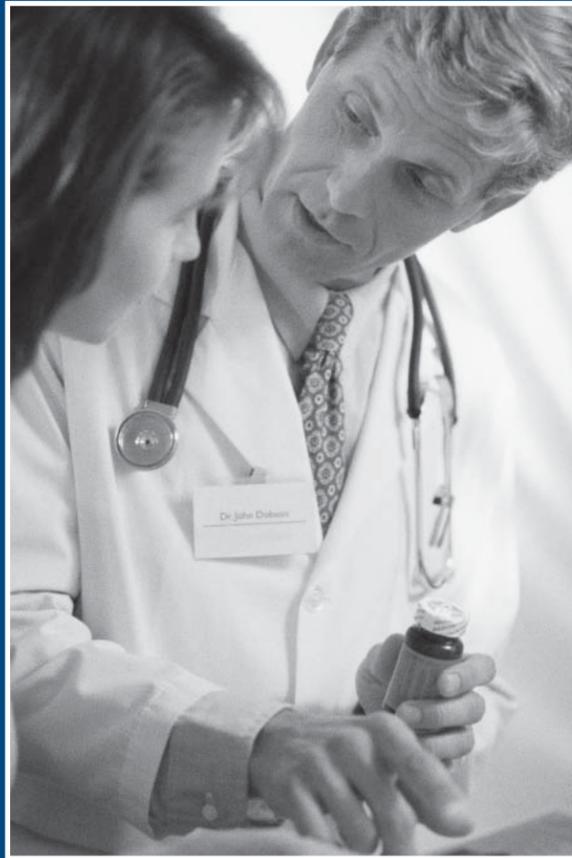
Minnesota Alliance for Patient Safety
"A Call to Action: Roles and Responsibilities for Assuring Patient Safety"

To order copies of this brochure or for more information contact:
MAPS
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www.mnpatientsafety.org

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■ Patient Safety: Your Role





Health-care professionals are committed to providing the best care possible for their patients.

Minnesota is known around the country as a leader in patient safety; however because health care has become so complex, errors can still occur. The most important way you can help prevent medical errors is to be an active member of the health-care team. Take part in every decision and learn as much as you can about your care and treatment options. Ask questions. Your health-care team is here to help you get better.

At the hospital or clinic

■ **Have someone with you.**

Bring a family member or friend who knows your medical history and who can also ask questions. This can help to ensure the best care possible. Family members often provide the comfort and support needed to promote your return to good health.

■ **Bring medicines.**

Bring all the medicines you are taking or a list of medications to every appointment. Take along a list of questions, as well as your goals for your visit.

■ **Be active and speak up.**

- Share medical information. Write down important information and carry it with you. Keep a list of medical history, office visits, and medication use. Medical information should include allergies and the names, addresses and phone numbers of important health-care providers.
- Make sure you understand the plan of treatment. Ask the nurse or doctor to explain any test results and the plan of treatment. If anything is not clear, speak up and ask questions.
- Make sure you know what medicines should be taken. Make sure you know what has been

ordered for your care. Ask questions if the medicines look different than they did before.

- Wash hands. Patients, family members and caregivers should wash hands frequently to prevent the spread of infection.
- Know who is in charge of care. Make sure that someone, such as your personal doctor, is in charge of the care for you or your family member. This is especially important in a hospital or in case of a complex illness. Ask if your primary physician will be at the hospital.

■ **Take notes.**

Write down any questions about your condition, treatment, clinic visit or hospital stay. Take notes about what you learn from your caregiver. At the end of your visit to the clinic or hospital, ask for information in writing, including information about medications, follow-up care and your treatment plan.

■ **Prepare for surgery.**

- Ask questions. Prior to surgery, talk to the physician and nurse about any concerns.
- Talk about the procedure. Make sure that you, the doctor and surgeon all agree and are clear on exactly what is going to be done.



- Observe site marking. Make sure the body area to be operated on is clearly marked by the surgeon.

■ **Be Alert.**

“Nothing about me without me.” Make sure that you are involved every step of the way. If something looks wrong, speak up.

■ **Learn as much as you can.**

It is up to you to learn as much as you can about your care and treatment. The most important way you can help to prevent medical errors is to be an active and informed member of the health-care team. This means taking part in every health-care decision.