

20 TIPS TO HELP PREVENT MEDICAL ERRORS IN CHILDREN

Medical errors happen when something that was planned as a part of medical care doesn't work out, or when the wrong plan was used in the first place. Medical errors can happen anywhere in the health care system hospitals, clinics, doctors' offices, pharmacies, or patients' homes. Medical errors can involve medicines, surgery, equipment, diagnosis, or lab reports.



Below are twenty tips to help you prevent medical errors for your child.

Be involved in your child's health care

1. The single most important way you can help prevent errors is to be an active member of your child's health care team.

Medicines

2. Make sure that all of your child's doctors know about everything your child is taking and his or her weight. This includes prescription and over-the-counter medicines, and dietary supplements such as vitamins and herbs.

3. Make sure your child's doctor knows about any allergies and how your child reacts to medicines.

4. When your child's doctor writes you a prescription, make sure you can read it.

5. When you pick up your child's medicine from the pharmacy, ask: Is this the medicine that my doctor prescribed?

6. Ask for information about your child's medicines in terms you can understand—both when the medicines are prescribed and when you receive them at the pharmacy.

- What is the name of the medicine?
- What is the medicine for?
- Is the medicine safe for my child to take with other medicines or supplements?
- Should any foods, drinks, or activities be avoided while taking this medicine?
- When should I see an improvement?

7. If you have questions about the instructions on your child's medicine labels, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

If you need additional information, contact the Family Health Line at 1-800-451-BABY (2229)

8. Ask your pharmacist for the best device to measure your child's liquid medicine. Also, ask questions if you're not sure how to use the device.
9. Ask for written information about the side effects your child's medicine could cause and how you should handle the side effects if they do occur.

Hospital Stays

10. If you have a choice, choose a hospital at which many children have the procedure or surgery your child needs.
11. If your child is in the hospital, ask all health care workers who have direct contact with your child whether they have washed their hands.
12. When your child is being discharged from the hospital, ask his or her doctor to explain the treatment plan you will use at home.

Surgery

13. If your child is having surgery, make sure that you, your child's doctor, and the surgeon all agree and are clear on exactly what will be done.

Other Steps You Can Take

14. Speak up if you have concerns.
15. Make sure that you know who is in charge of your child's care.
16. Make sure that all health professionals involved in your child's care have important health information about him or her.
17. Ask a family member or friend to be there with you and to be your advocate. Choose someone who can help get things done and speak up for you if you can't.
18. Ask why each test or procedure is being done.
19. If your child has a test, ask when the results will be available.
20. Learn about your child's condition and treatments by asking the doctor and nurse and by using other reliable sources.

Adapted from Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality Patient Fact Sheet "20 Tips to Help Prevent Medical Errors."



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