

Healthy Steps to Safety

From your friends at Blue Care Network

The more you know the safer you are

More Americans die from medical mistakes than from motor vehicle accidents, breast cancer or AIDS.

- A hospitalized patient on a salt-free diet is given high-salt meals.
- A pharmacist misinterprets a doctor's handwriting and gives a patient the wrong medication.
- A surgeon operates on the left leg instead of the right.

Errors in medication, surgery, diagnosis, diagnostic equipment and lab reports can even lead to patient death. How can you prevent errors from happening in your care?

Research shows that patients who ask questions and become involved in their own health care tend to get the most satisfying results. Follow these steps, and you'll be less likely to become a victim of medical error.

- Be an active member of your own health care team. Take part in every decision that has to do with your health.
- Make sure you tell your doctor every medication you are taking (including over-the-counter medications) so your doctor will not prescribe anything that interacts with your present medications.
- If you are having surgery, make sure that you, your doctor and your surgeon all agree and are clear on exactly what will be done.
- Speak up if you have questions or concerns. You have the right to question anyone involved in your care.
- Know that more is not always better. Just because a test or treatment is recommended doesn't mean it is necessary. Find out why your doctor asked for it.

Ask Me 3™: Good questions for your good health

Every time you talk with a doctor, nurse or pharmacist, use the Ask Me 3 questions to better understand your health.

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

Are you nervous to ask your health provider questions? Don't be. You may be surprised to learn that your medical team wants you to let them know that you need help.

Are you prepared in case of emergency?

We suggest that you:

- Keep a well-stocked first-aid kit at home, at work and in your car.
- Take a first-aid class. Learn CPR, proper methods for treating burns, wrapping sprains and performing the Heimlich maneuver (for choking victims).
- Post a list of these key emergency numbers by the phone: the police, fire department, poison control center, hospital, ambulance service and your family doctor's office.
- Keep a list of all your medications and dosages. In an emergency, you might not be able to speak for yourself, so carry it with you.
- Make a list of allergies, especially drug allergies, and carry it with you.

For tips on avoiding the emergency room, request our booklet, *Top 10 tips for avoiding the emergency room*. Call the Customer Service number on the back of your ID card.

Puzzle

Safety in Numbers

Unscramble these words and phrases. The first one is done for you. Transfer each letter into the boxes on the right. Then, transfer each circled letter to the 13 boxes below. The letters will spell out a BCN program.

(Answers on this page)

1. CRABES
2. MARBLU WILPLO (2 words)
3. MYENERGCE BURNEMS (2 words)
4. NEKE DAPS (2 words)
5. FLIE JTCEKA (2 words)
6. STRIF DIA TKI (3 words)
7. MEHO DIMECAL
MINETPUQE (3 words)
8. BRAG BRAS (2 words)
9. SHEETLM
10. RITSW SPAD (2 words)

BRACES

Hint: Get 20 percent discounts from Michigan Dunham's Sports and Michigan Wright & Filippis stores with this BCN injury prevention program. 3 words

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Diagnostic information

Fight germs, wash your hands

What's the cheapest, easiest and single best way to prevent the spread of bad germs?

Wash your hands.

Hand washing is the first line of defense against the spread of infectious disease for adults as well as for children, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Here are CDC guidelines for the most effective hand washing:

- Always use warm, running water and mild, preferably liquid, soap.
- Wet hands and apply soap. Rub hands together vigorously until a soapy lather appears, and wash for 20 seconds. Be sure to scrub between fingers, under fingernails and palms.
- Dry hands on a clean, disposable towel. Turn the faucet off using the towel.

Wash your hands before eating or handling food, before feeding a child, after using the toilet, after diapering or helping a child use the toilet, after work or outdoor activities, after handling pets and after wiping a child's nose or mouth.

It's a fact

Did you know?

- Proper hand washing may eliminate nearly half of all cases of foodborne illness and significantly reduce the spread of the common cold and flu.
- We have between 2 million and 10 million bacteria between the fingertip and elbow.
- Damp hands spread 1,000 times more germs than dry hands.
- Germs can stay alive on hands for up to three hours.

Resources

Blue Care Network supports programs across the health care system to reduce medical errors and make all health care settings safer for people seeking care.

For more information about our patient safety partnerships, go to: MiBCN.com/safety.

Answers to Safety in Numbers puzzle: 1. Braces, 2. Lumbar pillow, 3. Emergency numbers, 4. Knee pads, 5. Life jacket, 6. First aid kit, 7. Home medical equipment, 8. Grab bars, 9. Helmets, 10. Wrist pads
BCN injury prevention program: BlueSafe for MI