Everyone has a role in making health care safe. That includes family members, caregivers, doctors and health care professionals. Home care organizations all across the country are working to make health care safe. As the patient, you can make your care safer by being an active, involved and informed member of your health care team.

The "Speak Up" program is sponsored by The Joint Commission. They agree that patients should be involved in their own health care. These efforts to increase patient awareness and involvement are also supported by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

This program gives simple advice on how you can make health care a good experience. Research shows that patients who take part in decisions about their own health care are more likely to get better faster. To help prevent health care mistakes, patients are urged to “Speak Up.”
Speak Up if you have questions or concerns. If you still don’t understand, ask again. It’s your
body and you have a right to know.

• Your health is important. Do not be embarrassed if you
don’t understand what your home care professional
tells you.
• Don’t be afraid to ask about safety.
• Check the label on any medicines that are mailed to your
home. Make sure it says the correct drug and dose for you.
• Don’t be afraid to tell your home care professional if you
think you are about to get the wrong medicine or
treatment. Or if you have equipment that you don’t think you
need.
• Don’t be afraid to tell your home care professional if you
think they have confused you with another patient.

Pay attention to the care you get. Make sure you
get the right treatments and medicines by the
right home care professional. Don’t assume anything.

• Tell your home care professional if something doesn’t
seem right.
• Home care workers should introduce themselves.
Look for their identification (ID) badges.
• Make sure you or family members know how to use
your home care staff person to explain them.
• Do not smoke or let anyone smoke near you if you
use oxygen at home.

Ask a trusted family member or friend to be your
advocate (advisor or supporter).

• Your advocate can ask questions that you may not
think about when you are stressed.
• Ask this person to be with you during home care
visits. Your advocate can make sure you get the
right medicines, treatments, and equipment.
• Your advocate can help remember answers to
questions you have asked. They can speak up
for you when you cannot speak up for yourself.
• Make sure the person understands the care you
want. Make sure they know what you want done
about life support and other life-saving efforts.
• Read the consents for treatment with your advocate
before you sign them. Make sure you both understand
exactly what you are agreeing to.
• Your advocate should know what to look for if your
condition gets worse. They should also know who
to call for help.

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