



How to keep safe from medical mistakes

Medical errors—from surgery mistakes to misdiagnosis to medication mix-ups—are the third leading cause of death in the U.S. Providers and hospitals are working to address this complex problem. But there are things you can do to help make sure you get the right care safely. Taking an active role in your healthcare and communicating with your doctors can lead to better results, quality, safety and satisfaction.

Follow these important tips!

Speak up and get the right information

- Ask questions during your appointments. Write down the answers and repeat back what you understand.
- Be open with your providers about your symptoms, medications, allergies, and medical history.
- Get copies of your records and test results.

Get clarification about surgery

Ask your surgeon:

- Why you need the procedure, what happens if you don't have it, and if there are any alternatives
- What are the risks, complications and length of recovery?
- What is their experience with this procedure?
- Which hospital/facility is best for your needs?
- Will the correct part of your body be marked before the operation?

Be smart about medications

- Tell your doctor about all medications you take (prescription and over-the-counter) and vitamin/herbal supplements.
- With each new prescription, ask what the medication is for, how/when you should take it, and what the side effects or possible interactions are with other medications or foods.
- When you receive your medication, check the label to see if it matches what your doctor ordered.

Stay safe in the hospital

Poor communication is the main source of errors that can occur in hospitals. Infections are a major preventable problem. Be sure to:

- Insist on clean hands. Ask everyone who enters your room — including visitors — to wash their hands.
- Make sure your healthcare team checks your hospital ID wristband before giving you any medication or procedure.
- Keep pen and paper handy to write down when doctors see you, which drugs you receive and when, and any questions that you have.
- Review and make sure you understand your discharge instructions.

Consider a second opinion

Having another doctor confirm your diagnosis and course of treatment is particularly important if you're facing a procedure. A second opinion may result in a different treatment.



Healthy food, healthy weight

Maintaining a healthy weight is part of good health. Being underweight or overweight can put you at risk for health conditions such as weakened immune system, fatigue, anemia, hypertension, diabetes, high cholesterol, certain types of cancer and more. At the same time, the manner in which you choose to maintain your weight is very important. Often times, people fall into diet trends and fail to maintain their weight in healthy manners.

Healthy food, healthy you!

Food fuels your body and helps it function. Eating nutritious foods may help your body function more efficiently, prevent chronic disease and help you feel more energized. Eating healthy is one of the best things you can do for your health! Try these easy methods to modify your eating habits to ensure you're filling up on healthy foods.

MyPlate

This simple rule is helpful to remember at each meal. Make half your plate fruits and vegetables, one quarter protein, and one quarter grains at each meal. Check out [ChooseMyPlate.gov](https://www.choosemyplate.gov) for nutrition tips, recipes and educational information.

80/20 Rule

Prevent overindulging by allowing yourself to eat unhealthy some of the time. Adopt an 80/20 rule: Eat healthy 80 percent of the time and unhealthy 20 percent. You can improve your eating even further with a 90/10 rule!

Peace Sign

Think of the food you eat at each meal if it was laid out on the form of a peace sign on your plate. Eat mostly [whole grains](#) and [fruits and vegetables](#), which would make up the two large upper portions. Include [protein and dairy](#) in lesser amounts, which would represent the smaller portions.

The Hunger Scale

This scale ranks physical cues of hunger to help you identify when to eat to prevent overeating. You should still watch what you eat when using this method!

1. Starving: You feel weak, dizzy and may feel a burning sensation in your stomach.
2. Very hungry: You feel agitated, irritable and have low energy levels.
3. Pretty hungry: Your stomach is starting to growl.
4. Beginning of hunger: You will start feeling the need to eat, but you can wait.
5. Satisfied: You are content, neither hungry nor full.
6. Slightly full: You feel a little full, but comfortable.
7. Slightly uncomfortable: Hunger is gone, but you feel a little uncomfortable.
8. Stuffed: You feel like you ate too much.
9. Very uncomfortable: Your stomach may hurt and you feel like you might get sick.
10. Overstuffed: You feel so full you are sick.

Aim to eat when your hunger is at a 3 or 4 and stop eating when you're at a 5 or 6.

How to overcome burnout

Feeling blah, frustrated or cynical about your job that you once loved? Snapping at family members or coworkers? Does every day feel like an uphill trudge and no amount of caffeine or sleep seems to help? Feeling mentally and physically exhausted, unmotivated, pessimistic, and frustrated are classic signs of burnout—which can occur from the ongoing stress of having too many demands placed on your time or attention and too few resources to deal with it. If it's not addressed, burnout can seriously harm your health, happiness, relationships and job performance.

The good news is that you can make changes to restore the balance you need. Even better, you don't have to completely overhaul your life—small changes can shift your outlook and your energy. When you're stretched thin, here are a few tips to help take the pressure off, restore and reinvigorate you:

Take time to make an inventory. List all of the situations that cause you to feel stressed, depleted, anxious, worried, frustrated, and/or helpless. Rank them in order of most to least stressful—this will give you an idea of where to initially focus your efforts on making changes.

Reset your priorities. Spend quiet time figuring out what's really important to you. It's a great way to whittle down that overwhelming to-do list and establish a healthier work/life balance. For example, do your kids really need to be shuttled to several organized activities every weekend? Do you really need to head up one more committee? Paring things down to what's essential—and saying “no” to all the rest—can help you carve out more unstructured, restorative activities, like exploring a nearby trail at a leisurely pace with family or friends, for example.

Tune into your true interests and skills. You may need a job that's less demanding (or perhaps more stimulating) and that is a better match for you. For starters, explore changing positions within your company. Switching from accounting to product development, for example, might provide new stimulation to reinvigorate you.

Request support. At work, you could ask for a flexible work schedule. Or see if you can swap certain aspects of your job with a coworker. At home, make sure the family calendar reflects the division of daily chores right down to who folds the laundry so it doesn't always fall on you!

Recharge your batteries. Make self-care a priority. Take short breaks throughout the day to just sit quietly or step outside—even just a few minutes in nature can be restorative. Make space for those activities and people that boost, rather than drain, your spirits. And get regular exercise!

Hang out with like-minded people. Sharing humor and venting frustrations with people you trust helps lighten the load when you feel overwhelmed.

Change your scenery. Feeling stuck in a rut can be de-motivating! Some ideas: Walk through a completely different neighborhood, shop at a specialty foods grocery store, or browse an unexplored section of the bookstore. Fresh input can help shift your perspective and counteract emotional exhaustion.

Learn something new. Sign up for an online or community course to improve your tech skills, learn a new language, or how to cook a new cuisine. Mastering something new can reignite your confidence—and your outlook.

Disconnect from digital devices. As much as possible, turn off your iPad, computer, and smartphone—or set a time limit for their use. Put your phone in a drawer when you get home so it's out of sight, out of mind. Pare down your contact list by disconnecting from people you don't know very well. And remember, not every text message has to be answered on the spot. Take a pause and postpone your response.

Unplug from work by engaging in activities. Resist the temptation to sit on the couch and snack your way through a TV series all evening. Cooking with your partner or playing a game of Scrabble with your teen, for example, can get your mind off work and increase your energy.

If, despite your efforts to make changes, you have lingering exhaustion, moodiness or a feeling of hopelessness, your burnout may be something more serious, like depression. See your doctor for an evaluation.