

Protecting Your Child's Health

(NAPSA)—Parents can take charge of children's health—and help prevent medical errors—by asking questions of those involved with your child's care.

This can be particularly critical if your child has several health problems or is in the hospital.

Errors can occur in hospitals, doctors' offices, clinics, outpatient surgery centers, and pharmacies; and they can involve diagnoses, lab reports, and medicines.

In a study funded by the federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), experts found that doctors often do not provide enough information to help people make informed decisions about their health care.

Here are tips to help in talking to the doctor or hospital worker about your child's care:

- Know your child's condition and symptoms. Work with the health care team. Ask questions if you don't understand something.
- Ask about medications; how much medicine the child should take, how often he should take it and if there are side effects to watch for.
- Inquire about each medical test or procedure. Ask how it can help him and if there are any preparations for the test or procedure.
- Choose a hospital where many children have had the same procedure or surgery.
- If your child needs surgery, ask the doctor and the surgeon to explain what needs to be done, why, and how they plan to do it.



Parents should be sure they understand their youngsters' health problems and treatments.

Talk to the anesthesiologist. Ask the doctor to explain the treatment plan that you will use at home, and about any follow-up visits.

A new, free fact sheet from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality and the American Academy of Pediatrics, called *20 Tips to Help Prevent Medical Errors in Children*, offers evidence-based, practical tips on avoiding medical errors related to prescription medicines, hospital stays, and surgery. Copies in English and Spanish are available from AHRQ's Publications Clearinghouse, 1-800-358-9295 or ahrqpubs@ahrq.gov. The fact sheet is also at <http://www.ahrq.gov/consumer/20tipkid.htm> or <http://www.aap.org/visit/qualityimp.htm>.