



spotlight on health

Standing Up For Your Health

(NAPSA)—Being active isn't just good for your health, it's good for your health care. Patients who get involved and ask their health care provider questions improve the quality of their care.

Still, many patients are unaware of the important role they play when it comes to receiving better care or—in some cases—preventing medical mistakes. Research shows that medical mistakes account for an estimated 44,000 to 98,000 deaths each year, which is, at a minimum, 120 deaths a day.

To empower patients to be more involved in their health care, the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services' Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) partnered with the Ad Council to launch a national, multimedia public service advertising (PSA) campaign. The PSA encourages adults to ask questions and become more involved in their (and their family's) health care. It offers these tips:

- Bring a list of questions to the exam room and take notes during your medical appointments.
- Be an active member of your health care team. Be prepared to ask questions, especially if you are having trouble understanding a diagnosis or treatment.
- If you have been hospitalized, be certain you understand instructions regarding follow-up care.
- Be certain all of your health care providers know about the



A new campaign encourages people to get more involved with their health care.

medicines—prescription and over-the-counter—as well as dietary supplements that you take.

- Ask for information about your medicines in terms that you can understand.
- If you have a choice, choose a hospital and a doctor that have plenty of experience performing the procedure or surgery that you need.
- 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 any questions or concerns.
- Ask a family member to go to the hospital with you to serve as your advocate.
- If you have a medical test, ask for results. Don't assume that no news is good news.

For more information and tips, call (800) 931-AHRQ, or visit www.AHRQ.gov/questionsaretheanswer.