



NEWS RELEASE

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New educational campaign from The Joint Commission helps patients advocate for safer surgery

(OAKBROOK TERRACE, Illinois, Nov. 17, 2020) – The Joint Commission has released [*Speak Up™ For Safe Surgery*](#), a new educational campaign to help patients advocate for safer surgery. According to the new guidance, patients can help ensure their surgery is safe and successful by being an informed member of the care team.

No one ever expects a surgical error to happen to them. However, wrong-site, wrong-procedure and wrong-patient surgery errors, while not common, are possible. Estimates show these procedures could occur as often as [40 times per week](#) in the United States. In addition, many other types of errors related to patient counseling, anesthesia, medication management or other categories could occur. While an operating team should practice [universal protocol](#) to prevent these errors, patients and their advocates can help the care team by actively participating during the planning stages, immediately before surgery and after surgery.

Planning for surgery

Patients can talk to their doctors about:

- Regular medications taken, and if or when the patient should stop taking them.
- Dietary needs before surgery.
- Options regarding anesthesia or sedation.

Have a friend, relative or patient advocate:

- Take the patient to and from the hospital or surgery facility.
- Communicate patient directives to the care team when the patient cannot.
- Help ask questions about the procedure.

Before surgery

Before signing an Informed Consent form, patients should:

- Confirm the surgery and the exact location of the procedure.
- Talk about risks involved and the post-surgery care plan.
- Speak up if something doesn't seem right.

After surgery

Communicate with the care team about:

- Medication dosages and any medication allergies.
- Any potential signs of infection such as chills, fever or redness near the surgical site.
- Scheduling follow-up appointments.
- Plans for after discharge from the hospital or surgery center.

The risk of any procedure is increased right now because of the COVID-19 pandemic. To help, the campaign also offers special considerations to help keep surgery patients safe from COVID-19, such as asking about the facility's pandemic-related safety procedures.

“By communicating with the care team, patients have an opportunity to have a safer, successful surgery. Patients who ask questions and follow instructions from their provider can improve recovery and return to normal life more quickly,” said Executive Vice President, Chief Medical Officer, and Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer Ana Pujols McKee, MD, The Joint Commission. “Because of this, the latest *Speak Up* campaign is a valuable resource for surgery patients, whether they are heading into their first surgery or their tenth.”

The campaign includes an informational poster in both English and Spanish, as well as an animated video that follows a patient and their provider before and after surgery, modeling a positive patient-provider relationship.

Organizations are free to reproduce and disseminate the [Speak Up™ for Safe Surgery](#) materials if they credit The Joint Commission.

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About the *Speak Up*™ program

Launched in 2002, the award-winning [Speak Up](#)™ program has been used in more than 70 countries. It encourages patients to be their own advocates and to:

- **S**peak up
- **P**ay attention
- **E**ducate yourself
- **A**dvocates (family members and friends) can help
- **K**now about your new medicine
- **U**se a quality health care organization
- **P**articipate in all decisions about your care

The Joint Commission's refreshed *Speak Up*™ program that debuted last year, after national market research including focus group feedback from patients and their families.

For updates on new *Speak Up*™ campaigns as they become available, sign up for email alerts or subscribe to the e-newsletter Joint Commission Online. For more information about the *Speak Up*™ program, visit [The Joint Commission website](#).

About The Joint Commission

Founded in 1951, [The Joint Commission](http://www.jointcommission.org) seeks to continuously improve health care for the public, in collaboration with other stakeholders, by evaluating health care organizations and inspiring them to excel in providing safe and effective care of the highest quality and value. The Joint Commission accredits and certifies more than 22,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States. An independent, nonprofit organization, The Joint Commission is the nation's oldest and largest standards-setting and accrediting body in health care. Learn more about The Joint Commission at www.jointcommission.org.