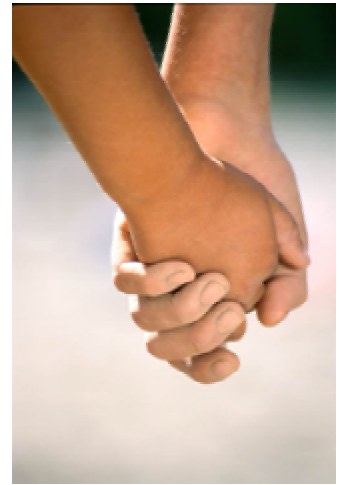


## Health Facts

### In the Hospital: Having an Advocate

To get high quality health care, it always helps to be an informed and motivated health care consumer. But if you have to go into the hospital for surgery or some other procedure, it may not be feasible for you to speak up for yourself. That also may be the case if you're diagnosed with a serious illness that will require ongoing treatment. When this happens, you want to make sure that you have an advocate to speak up for you.



Whether your advocate is a friend or family member, he or she needs to be vigilant about the care that you are receiving. If serious treatment is in the works for you, find an advocate you can trust – and ask him or her to keep these points in mind:

- **Getting Informed.** You know the importance of getting informed about your condition and the treatments you are having. It's also important for your advocate to be informed as well. Find an advocate who's willing to take a little time to get informed (from <http://medlineplus.gov> or other reliable sources) about the health problems you're having and the procedures you'll likely undergo.
- **Monitoring Treatment.** Your advocate should monitor your treatment and interact with your doctors as necessary. Doctors may see you at odd times of the day, and medications or other treatments can be administered at any hour. The more time your advocate can be in your room, the better.
- **Asking Questions.** If something doesn't seem right, your advocate should speak up. Ask the doctor or nurse why things are happening as they are, and if the prescribed treatment regimen is being followed (and if not, why not).
- **Watching for Medications.** Medication errors are all too common in hospitals and health care facilities. Your advocate can play an important role in lessening your odds of being on the wrong end of a medication error. Ask your advocate to be vigilant about *what drugs* are being given to you, in *what dosages*, and on *what schedule*.

Some patients believe that they can do without an advocate, and then later wish they had one. Make sure to find your advocate well before you go into treatment, if at all possible. For more tips on quality care, including having an advocate, visit [www.ahrq.gov](http://www.ahrq.gov) > Consumers & Patients > Quality of Care > 20 Tips to Help Prevent Medical Errors.