Help Prevent Medical Errors

Thousands of Americans die each year as a result of medical errors. Common errors include medication mix-ups, unnecessary blood transfusions, health care facility-contracted infections, patients not reporting side effects and inadequate patient preparation before and after surgery.

The places where errors most often occur are in hospital patients’ rooms, operating rooms, emergency units, delivery rooms, primary providers’ offices and intensive care units.

The single best way you can help prevent errors is to stay closely involved in every decision of your medical care. For example:

Keep your health care officially coordinated by a single practitioner.

When picking up a prescription, always ask the pharmacist: Is this what my health care provider prescribed?

Before surgery, make sure that you, your provider and surgeon all agree on exactly what will be done.

During a hospital stay, ask your medical team what medicines you will be taking, how much, how often and why; that way you can match these instructions against the hospital staff that administers your drugs.

Don’t assume everyone knows everything they need to, and don’t hesitate to speak up. If possible, enlist someone who can advocate for you at appointments or during hospital stays.

The way to minimize medical errors is for providers, hospital administrations, governments, health plan providers and patients to stay aware and commit to a safer system at all levels.

“\textit{In health there is freedom. Health is the first of all liberties.}”

– Henri-Frederic Amiel

Overview:
The Omegas

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Dietary fat is an essential part of our diet. But, some types of fat are better for you than others. Here’s what you need to know about the omega fatty acids.

We need omega-3 fats for our bodies to function properly. We have to get omega-3s from food, since our bodies can’t make them.

There are 3 main types of omega-3 fats: DHA and EPA from fish such as salmon and trout (eat 2 to 3 times a week), and ALA from plant-based sources such as walnuts, flax and canola. Because there are limited sources for omega-3, many people do not get enough in their diet.

>> Adequate omega-3 intake is associated with less inflammation. Lowering inflammation is important if you have an inflammatory condition such as Crohn’s, colitis, rheumatoid arthritis, gout or psoriasis. Chronic inflammation is also linked to an increased risk of cancer.

>> Omega-6 fats are also essential for good health. However, they’re in many foods, so North Americans don’t tend to be short on omega-6s. Food sources include: all vegetable oils (grapeseed, sunflower, corn, soybean, etc.), nuts, seeds, salad dressings, dairy, meat, whole grains and any foods made with oil.

>> Omega-9 fats are neutral or beneficial for health. They are monounsaturated fats and are plentiful in olive, canola and avocado oils.

The single most important thing you can do to improve your omega fat ratio is to switch your oils. Instead of omega-6-rich sunflower, corn or soybean oils, switch to olive, canola or avocado oils, which are higher in omega-9 fats, and use omega-3-rich flaxseed oil for salads.
Cancer Update: Facts and Figures

The overall cancer death rate in the U.S. is declining, and the number of cancer survivors is increasing, according to the American Cancer Society’s 2016 cancer report. A major reason for the decline is early detection. Recent statistics:

- **Death rates in the U.S. for the 4 most common cancers** – prostate, lung, colorectal and breast – and all cancers combined have been gradually declining (since 1998). Death rates are also declining for brain, leukemia, ovary, stomach and bladder cancers.

- **The No. 1 cause of cancer deaths in the U.S. is lung cancer**, in both men and women, primarily due to smoking.

- **Excess body fat is connected to 11 cancers**, and considered the second leading risk factor for cancer after smoking.

- **Alcohol consumption likely causes several forms of cancer**, including those of the larynx, esophagus, liver, colon, rectum and female breast.

Cancer treatment is most successful when the disease is found early. Discuss cancer screening with your health care provider.

Scientists hope their immunotherapy research will eventually lead to a universal cancer vaccine. Meanwhile, a substantial number of cancers could be prevented by not using tobacco, limiting alcohol use and maintaining a healthy weight.

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September is Whole Grains Month.

**Ancient Grains for Modern Tables**

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

**Farro, millet, quinoa and sorghum are all ancient grains**, which is the name for cereal crops that have been largely unchanged in the past several hundred years. Here’s a variety of nutritious ancient grains to add to your plate.

**Farro:** This grain is popular in Italy and is related to wheat. It comes in 3 varieties: farro piccolo (einkorn), farro medio (emmer), and farro grande (spelt). Whole-grain farro berries are high in fiber and are great in soup, risotto and salad. They cook faster if you soak them overnight. You can also try farro pasta.

**Millet:** This tropical, yellow-hued grain is a small seed. It cooks to a grainy or creamy consistency, depending on cooking time and how much liquid is added. Enjoy as a morning porridge with cinnamon and raisins, or as part of a pilaf mixed with quinoa. Millet is gluten-free and high in magnesium.

**Quinoa:** This Peruvian native is also a seed rather than a true grain. Quinoa cooks quickly (15 minutes), is a complete protein and is high in iron and B-vitamins. It’s also gluten-free. It comes in tan, black and red varieties.

**Sorghum:** This gluten free grain is popular in Africa and is the 5th most important cereal crop globally. The small circular orbs are about the size of peppercorns and hold their shape well when cooked. The nutty flavor makes sorghum perfect for savory side dishes.

**Bonus:** Sorghum pops like popcorn when heated with oil.
Be Prepared for Workplace Emergencies

A coworker chokes on his lunch — what should you do? A fire breaks out in a trash can — where is the fire extinguisher? A tornado is sighted near your worksite — where do you go? You should know the answers to the questions before these scenarios occur in real life. National Preparedness Month is a good time to prepare for these and other workplace emergencies.

Here's what you can do to be ready for the unexpected:

Know where the nearest emergency exits are and memorize the easiest evacuation route(s) at work.

Get training in the Heimlich maneuver and CPR.

Identify where first aid kits and defibrillators are stored.

Locate the closest fire extinguisher and learn how to operate it.

Know where all Safety Data Sheets are.

Familiarize yourself with eyewash stations and how to use them in an emergency.

Know where emergency shutoff buttons are on the machines that you work with and every machine nearby.

Find out where all personal protective equipment is kept and know when and how to use it.

Make a plan for hazardous spills — know where spill kits are located. See "Take a Spill (Kit)" below.

Report all near-misses to your supervisor.

Take a Spill (Kit)

Being prepared for an emergency means locating and knowing what's in your workplace spill kit. If you work with hazardous materials or chemicals, you should have the proper spill kit nearby.

Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) will have all information related to spill kit requirements and proper disposal procedures for each type of chemical. Specialized supplies will be needed when working with acids, solvents, mercury, biological agents, radioactive material, air- and water-reactive chemicals and hydrofluoric acids.

For basic spill kit supplies, the University of Iowa Department of Environmental Health & Safety offers this handy guide:

- 1 5-gallon plastic bucket with a sealable lid.
- 2 pairs chemical splash goggles.
- 2 pairs chemical-resistant gloves.
- 2 pairs plastic, vinyl or rubber shoe covers.
- 2 disposable lab coats, aprons or coveralls.
- Universal absorbents such as commercial spill pads, pillows, spill socks and loose absorbents.
- A plastic broom or brush for solids.
- A dustpan, plastic scoop or shovel.
- 3 to 5 thick, heavy-duty trash bags.
- A cardboard box to hold waste bags containing spill debris.
- Sealing tape.
- EH&S hazardous waste labels.
- Forceps or tongs for picking up broken glass or other sharps.
- Detergent or general cleaner for final cleanup.

Children on Board

According to Safe Kids Worldwide, child safety seats, when used correctly, can reduce the risk of death in a car crash by 71%. Follow these 6 tips to ensure your child's safety:

1. Always use a car seat for your child, even if you are just going down the road.

2. Make sure the safety seat is appropriate for your child's age and weight.


4. Take your vehicle and car seat to a local car seat inspection event so a certified technician can help you install it properly. Check with your local fire or police station for an event near you.

5. Do not buy a used car seat unless you're certain it hasn't been in a crash. This means buying it from someone you know and trust, not from a secondhand store or at a garage sale.

6. Check the Consumer Product Safety Commission website at www cpsc.gov for information on product recalls and any other safety-related issues that have been reported.
Against the **Grain**

**Grain facilities** — places that receive, handle, store and process raw agriculture products such as corn, wheat and oats — have specific OSHA regulations and rules when it comes to safety. If you work in one, you have a responsibility to keep yourself and others safe. Follow these guidelines:

- **Understand** the hazards associated with working in a grain facility, including engulfment, which can lead to suffocation and falls. Dust accumulation can make breathing difficult and make the grain susceptible to ignition.
- **Know** your employer’s emergency plan, and train for emergency situations.
- **Never** walk down grain to make it flow. And never stand under or next to grain that has bridged, because it can collapse on you and engulf you in seconds.
- **Make** sure all equipment lockdown procedures are followed.
- **Make** sure you or your employer tests a facility — before you enter it — for combustible and toxic gases, and to determine if there is sufficient oxygen.
- **Wear** a body harness with a lifeline, as well as all other required PPE, when entering a grain facility containing stored grain.
- **Don’t enter a grain facility** without having someone trained to perform rescue operations standing on the outside of the facility.
- **Never** smoke or ignite or use any equipment that produces sparks near a facility that could have dust accumulation.
- **Read and understand** OSHA’s fact sheets and Safety and Health Bulletins regarding grain handling at [www.osha.gov/SLTC/grainhandling/](http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/grainhandling/).

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**Medications and Food**

Did you know certain foods could: increase the effects, cause side effects and alter how your medications work? For example, dairy foods and other foods high in calcium can decrease some antibiotics’ effectiveness. Foods high in vitamin K, such as green leafy vegetables, can reverse the effect of the blood thinner **warfarin**. Other foods and liquids that require caution include grapefruit juice, walnuts, bananas, alcohol and any caffeinated drink or food.

**For safe medication use:**

- Ask your health care provider and pharmacist if there are **any known problems** about using medications that you take regularly with certain foods, supplements or vitamins.
- Read the medication label and **drug facts** literature and follow the instructions.
- Call your health care provider if you are experiencing any side effects from medications.
- Check the **FDA’s website** for detailed information about food and drug interactions at [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov).

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**The Cutting Edge**

**Knife injuries are common, but they don’t have to happen to you.** Remember these 6 points when using a knife:

1. **USE** the proper knife for the task.
2. **KEEP** knives sharpened. Dull knives can cause injury because you have to work harder to make the cut.
3. **USE** a nonslip cutting board or place a damp cloth under your cutting board to prevent it from slipping.
4. **NEVER** leave a knife soaking in a sink filled with soapy water.
5. **STEP** back if you drop a knife — don’t try to catch it.
6. **STORE** knives properly in racks or sheaths.

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