

## NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **How Patients Can Make the Most of a Visit to the Doctor**

*The Joint Commission's latest Speak Up™ campaign provides advice*

(OAKBROOK TERRACE, Ill. – December 9, 2009) A visit to the doctor is a time to talk and learn, and patients play a critical role in their health care, just like doctors, nurses and other caregivers, according to The Joint Commission's "Tips for Your Doctor's Visit" Speak Up™ educational campaign. Patient-doctor communication is a vital component to safe, effective care. Approximately 902 million visits were made to doctors' offices in the United States during 2006, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Joint Commission's new brochure includes tips for visits to the doctor to help patients become more active and involved in their health care. Topics covered include talking with the doctor, preparing for a physical examination, lab tests, treatment or surgery and what to do after the appointment is over.

"A visit to the doctor's office can be an overwhelming and confusing experience for patients and families," says Mark R. Chassin, M.D., M.P.P., M.P.H., president, The Joint Commission. "Whether seeing the doctor for a routine checkup or for a specific condition, being informed and involved will help patients and their doctor get the most out of the visit. With knowledge and action, patients can take steps to make sure they receive the best care possible."

"Tips for Your Doctor's Visit" advises patients on such important issues as:

- Information to write down and share with the doctor.
- What to do if the patient does not understand the doctor.
- What to ask if a doctor prescribes new medicine.

The Joint Commission's new education campaign is part of the award-winning Speak Up™ program which urges patients to take an active role in their own health care. Speak Up™

brochures are available in English and Spanish at  
<http://www.jointcommission.org/PatientSafety/SpeakUp/>.

The basic framework of the Speak Up™ campaign urges patients to:

**Speak up** if you have questions or concerns, and, if you don't understand, ask again. It's your body and you have a right to know.

**Pay attention** to the care you are receiving. Make sure you're getting the right treatments and medications by the right health care professionals. Don't assume anything.

**Educate yourself** about your diagnosis, the medical tests you are undergoing, and your treatment plan.

**Ask a trusted family member or friend** to be your advocate.

**Know what medications you take and why you take them.** Medication errors are the most common health care errors.

**Use a hospital, clinic, surgery center, or other type of health care organization** that has undergone a rigorous on-site evaluation against established state-of-the-art quality and safety standards, such as that provided by The Joint Commission.

**Participate in all decisions about your treatment.** You are the center of the health care team.

Speak Up™ brochures also are available on surgery, infection control, medicines, follow-up care, research studies, understanding caregivers, pain management, child safety, and preparing to become a living organ donor.

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Founded in 1951, The Joint Commission 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 evaluates and accredits more than 17,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States, including more than 9,500 hospitals and home care organizations, and more than 6,300 other health care organizations that provide long term care, behavioral health care, laboratory and ambulatory care services. In addition, The Joint Commission also provides certification of more than 1,000 disease-specific care programs, primary stroke centers, and health care staffing services. An independent, not-for-profit 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](http://www.jointcommission.org).