The Joint Commission’s New Speak Up™ Brochure Offers Advice about Memory Problems and Dementia


Although it is perfectly normal to occasionally forget things, failing to recall how to get home or complete other everyday tasks may be a sign of a more serious problem. The free Speak Up brochure offers information for anyone concerned about forgetfulness by providing advice related to:

- When to become concerned about memory problems
- What causes memory problems
- How a family member or friend can help when you visit a doctor or other health care provider about memory problems
- What to expect when you visit the doctor about memory problems
- Questions to ask your doctor about dementia
- Why it is important to know if you have dementia
- How family members and friends can help someone diagnosed with dementia
- Where to find more information

The Joint Commission’s award winning Speak Up program features brochures and posters on a variety of patient safety topics. The national program urges patients to take a role in preventing health care errors by becoming active, involved and informed participants on the health care team.

The basic framework of the Speak Up initiative encourages patients to:

Speak up if you have questions or concerns. If you still don’t understand, ask again. It’s your body and you have a right to know.
Pay attention to the care you get. Always make sure you’re getting the right treatments and medicines by the right health care professionals. Don’t assume anything.

Educate yourself about your illness. Learn about the medical tests you get, and your treatment plan.

Ask a trusted family member or friend to be your advocate (advisor or supporter).

Know what medicines you take and why you take them. Medicine errors are the most common health care mistakes.

Use a hospital, clinic, surgery center, or other type of health care organization that has been carefully checked out. For example, The Joint Commission visits hospitals to see if they are meeting The Joint Commission’s quality standards.

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

Since its launch in 2002, the Speak Up program has grown to include 21 initiative brochures and seven posters as well as Spanish language versions of all brochures. The Joint Commission has also produced nine Speak Up videos that air on The Joint Commission’s YouTube Channel, as well as other venues, and has received nearly 115,000 views on YouTube alone. Videos in the series, the first of which debuted in March 2011, emphasize the importance of receiving care at home; understanding rights that all patients have; managing pain; being comfortable speaking up and asking questions about your health care; preventing infection; managing and taking medication safely; preparing for, and what to ask during, doctor's office appointments; encouraging children to feel confident asking questions about their health; and reducing the risk of falling.

Free downloadable files of all Speak Up videos, brochures and posters (including Spanish language versions of the brochures) are available on The Joint Commission website at: http://www.jointcommission.org/speakup.aspx. Speak Up brochures and posters also are available for purchase through Joint Commission Resources at (877) 223-6866 or online at www.jcrinc.com.

Speak Up™, “What You Should Know about Memory Problems and Dementia,” was developed in collaboration with the Alzheimer’s Association, Alzheimer’s Foundation of America, American Academy of Neurology, American Psychiatric Association, Family Caregiver Alliance/National Center of Caregiving, National Association of Social Workers, National Gerontological Nursing Association and the National Institute on Aging, National Institutes of Health.
Statements of support for the Speak Up™ “What You Should Know about Memory Problems and Dementia” initiative

“The Alzheimer's Association is proud to support The Joint Commission in their efforts to further educate about Alzheimer's and dementia. With more than five million Americans and more than 15 million caregivers, information and education for those living with Alzheimer's and their caregivers is so important for all those facing this disease.”

Sam Fazio, director of special projects, Alzheimer's Association

“It is crucial that people “Speak Up” if they have concerns about memory problems. Pinpointing the cause of someone’s memory loss, especially early on, can help lead to proper treatment, care planning and improved quality of life. However, in a survey conducted by the Alzheimer’s Foundation of America (AFA) during its National Memory Screening Day in 2010, 83 percent of participants who were worried about their memory had not discussed their concerns with a health care provider. By offering free, confidential memory screenings during National Memory Screening each November, our goal is to foster conversations around brain health. Likewise, by teaming up with The Joint Commission to provide education about memory concerns, we hope that more people will become educated about memory concerns and become empowered to take action. We applaud The Joint Commission for recognizing the importance of raising awareness of memory problems.”

Carol Steinberg, president, Alzheimer's Foundation of America

“We are pleased to support the efforts of The Joint Commission to help inform patients and families experiencing the significant challenges of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. These are devastating diseases desperately in need of effective treatments and, eventually, a cure. Until that time, however, neurologists remain committed to working with patients and families to provide information and the best possible care.”

Timothy A. Pedley, M.D., FAAN, president, American Academy of Neurology

“Memory loss and dementia present serious psychosocial, physical, and financial challenges for older adults and their families. Social workers play a key role in helping individuals and families cope with these challenges, and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is pleased to join The Joint Commission in educating the public about memory loss and dementia.”

Angelo McClain, Ph.D., LICSW, chief executive officer, NASW

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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 20,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States, including more than 10,300 hospitals and home care organizations, and more than 6,500 other health care organizations that provide nursing and rehabilitation center care, behavioral health care, laboratory and ambulatory care services. The Joint Commission currently certifies more than 2,000 disease-specific care programs, focused on the care of patients with chronic illnesses such as stroke, joint replacement, stroke rehabilitation, heart failure and many others. The Joint Commission also provides health care staffing services certification for more than 750 staffing offices. 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.