



### What is “good quality” care?

- The RIGHT care
- In the RIGHT amount
- In the RIGHT place
- At the RIGHT time

## “Good quality” health care – what does this mean?

When you get “good quality” health care, it means that your care is:

- Provided by skilled and knowledgeable health professionals who communicate clearly and involve you in decisions about your care.
- The type of care that medical research has shown to work best for your condition.
- Safe and timely.
- Only what you need— no unnecessary tests, treatments, or procedures.

### But doesn’t everyone get good quality care?

No. Unfortunately, research shows that sometimes patients receive care that does not measure up to “good quality” in the following ways –

- **Many patients are not given the type of treatment that research has shown to best work for their condition.** Instead, they are given other care that doesn’t work as well, whether that care is cheaper, quicker, or more convenient for their provider.
- **Many patients are not able to get the care they need, or there are delays in getting care they need.**
- **Many patients are given care that is unsafe, such as being given the wrong medicine.** Studies show that most medical mistakes can be prevented.

**An alarming number of costly mistakes are made each year** – mistakes that injure patients and waste health care resources. [NPR recently featured](#) a Washington Health Alliance report indicating that, within a single year in Washington, more than 600,000 patients received unnecessary treatment totaling an estimated \$282 million wasted on health care. A 2006 report from the Institute of Medicine says that medication errors are among the most common medical errors. These errors harm at least 1.5 million people every year. According to the report, it costs more than 3.5 billion dollars per year to treat hospital patients who are injured by medication errors. Find the report [here](#).

## What can you do to help make sure you are getting good quality care?

Once you understand that quality of health care varies greatly, it's clear that you can't take "Good quality health care" for granted. To help make sure you and your family get the quality you deserve, you will need to become actively involved in finding and using information on the type of care you receive. **Here are five tips to help you do so:**

1. **Be informed AND involved** – it's not enough to just research your care; you also need to play an active part in all the decisions that affect your health. (For more resources on quality care, go to: <http://www.comparemaine.org/?page=resources&subpage=health-costs-and-quality-websites>)
2. **Learn to engage with your health care provider**– To help make sure you get the care that works best for your condition, you can ask questions when you see your doctor or other health care provider. **Ask the Choosing Wisely 5 questions (click here to download)**. Ask for information about your treatment choices and ask whether any research has been done to find out which treatments work best. You can also find more information at [www.CompareMaine.org](http://www.CompareMaine.org) to compare costs by different health care facilities for certain treatments.
3. **Get the right amount of care (not too little, not too much)** – Choosing Wisely® helps patients and their health care providers have important conversations necessary to ensure the right care is delivered at the right time. Visit [www.mainequalitycounts.org/choosingwisely](http://www.mainequalitycounts.org/choosingwisely) to find out more. Choosing Wisely® is an initiative of the American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM) Foundation.
4. **Get care that is as safe as possible**– When you are making a treatment decision, be sure to ask about the risks, as well as the benefits, of each treatment choice.
5. **Do what you can to prevent medication mistakes** – medication mistakes are common, but there are many things you can do to help prevent them. These resources have more tips on safe use of medications:
  - Websites run by the National Council on Patient Information and Education: [www.talkaboutrx.org](http://www.talkaboutrx.org) and [www.bemedwise.org](http://www.bemedwise.org).
  - A patient guide called Your Medicine: Play It Safe at the website of the federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality ([www.ahrq.gov/consumer/safemeds/safemeds.htm](http://www.ahrq.gov/consumer/safemeds/safemeds.htm)).

Finding and using information about quality of care can help you stay healthy and help you make good decisions about treatment when you get sick. Above are resources that tell more about what you can do to help make sure that you and your family are getting good quality care.

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The materials are not offered for rendering medical or other professional advice and this information is not a substitute for the advice of a medical professional. If you require such advice, you should seek the services of a competent professional.