

## How to Protect Thyself - USA Today

**Nearly 2 million U. S. patients catch an infection from the hospital each year and about 90,000 die, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.**

- \* Prepare a “health profile”. Write down your medical conditions, allergies and medications including herbal supplements and vitamins. Bring your actual medication bottles to avoid misspelling the name of the drug, dose or directions for use.
- \* Avoid wrong –site surgery. Your surgeon should make the location of your surgery and should involve you in the process.
- \* Double check all your medications and treatments before accepting them. If you can’t read the doctor’s handwriting, the pharmacist may not be able to either. Doctors and nurses should check your wristband and ask your name before giving you drugs or treatments. Note when each dose is due and alert a nurse if a medication is late. If you’re given intravenous medication, ask your nurse how long it should take for the bag to run out.
- \* Take notes. Or bring a tape recorder. Studies show that patients remember less than 30% of what doctors say. Ask questions. When your test results will be available, then follow up if your doctor or nurse doesn’t call.
- \* Educate yourself. Learn about your medications. Key questions include: What is this medicine for? Who prescribed it? When am I supposed to take it? What are the likely side effects? Is this medicine safe to take with other drugs or supplements? What should I avoid while on this drug?
- \*Guard against **superbugs**. Ask everyone who enters your hospital room to wash their hands. Beware of objects in the hospital such as the TV remote control that aren’t washed very often. Get your sheets changed every day and ask for a new disposable pillow when checking in. Ask doctors if they have sanitized their stethoscopes, which can pick up germs with each new patient. If you need a catheter, ask for one coated in antiseptic which may reduce the risk of infection. Make sure hospital staff are obeying their own rules. If signs instruct staff to change into protective gloves and gowns before entering the room, remind people to follow these instructions.