



You Can!

Improve Communication with your Health Care Providers



Patients should take an active role in their health care. Whether it is your doctor, physical therapist, or other health care provider, it is important that you work with them in a partnership to achieve your best possible level of health. You should be able to trust, confide in, and tell your providers about your health problems, including symptoms. They in turn should listen to you and provide you with options.

Here are some tips to keep in mind to help with communication with your health care providers:

- **Be prepared** – Time is often limited, so the more organized you are the more likely you are to get your questions and concerns addressed. Write down your major concerns, and expect that only three or four questions can usually be addressed at a visit.
- **Keep accurate records** - Always have a legibly written list of your current medications with you, both prescription and over the counter (including supplements), as well as a list of any symptoms that concern you. It is also helpful to note the names of all health care providers you are seeing.
- **State your concerns clearly and honestly** - Let health care providers know that you want to participate in any decision-making process. If you have religious or cultural beliefs that affect your treatment, state them.
- **Be assertive** - Ask questions and if you do not understand responses, ask again until you do. If this is a frequent problem, tape-record your visit, take notes or bring someone with you to take notes. Ask for written instructions and any printed material that may help you with making decisions.
- **Be understanding and respectful** - Realize that you are in a partnership and that you need to do your part. Appreciate the time that is being spent with you and remember that if you need further help other medical providers may be able to assist (nurses, pharmacists etc).
- **Know what follow-up and communication is needed** - Schedule future appointments in a timely manner. Find out the best way to keep in touch between visits (e-mails, voice mails, etc)

**Following these suggestions can make your visits with health care providers
much more effective and less stressful.**

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