

Talking to your doctor and your health team

Tips for Better Communication

- Be prepared – you feel more confident and it will save time
- Explain your values, your needs, and your concerns.
- It is better to ask questions and voice concerns. It is not impolite.
- Take an active role. If you don't ask, the doctor may think you don't want to know.
- Listen. Take notes.

Your Responsibility

- Share information about your health and medications
- Be honest about your habits: foods, tobacco, too little sleep, etc.
- Do the things you agreed to: take medications, go to therapy

How much Responsibility do you want?

- What do you expect from the doctor (health care provider)?
 - Tell you exactly what to do
 - Explain options and help you make a decision
 - Give you information, but you make decisions
- How comfortable are you making decisions?
 - Prefer active participation in decisions
 - Prefer to follow directions
 - Prefer to discuss with family or a friend
- How much do you want to know?
 - All the details
 - Just the basics

Your Values and Goals

- What kind of treatment do you prefer?
 - Modern medicines and technology
 - Traditional treatments, herbs
 - Lifestyle changes: food, sleep, exercise
- What is important to you?
 - Control pain
 - Being able to work
 - Need to care for children or parents (etc.)

Ask if you do not understand. Don't be put off by big words.

- Can you explain that again?
- Can someone write this down for me?
- I am not sure I understand all these words.

Don't make a decision if you are not ready

- I need to think about that. Can I call and let you know?
- I would like to discuss this with my (wife, husband, brother, etc.).
- I am not comfortable with that. Is there an alternative?

Talking to your doctor and your health team

Write a Health History

- Illnesses, surgery, hospitalizations
- Medications
- Allergies
- List of immunizations
- List of doctors and other providers

Prepare for the Appointment

- My problems and symptoms
- How does this affect my daily life?
(work, sleep, eating, doing things with the family)
- When did it start?
- What makes it worse? (Better?)
- My questions for the health care provider

Bring with you to the Appointment

- Your written health history
- Your notes on problems and symptoms
- Your questions
- Pen and paper so that you can take notes
- A friend or family member

Ask Questions

- What is my condition? What do I have?
- What caused it?
- What do I need to do about it?
- Why is it important that I do this?
- What are the treatment options?
- What do you recommend? Why?

Questions if you Need Medications or Tests

- What are the benefits of the treatment? (tests)
- How should I expect to feel?
- What are the risks or side effects?
- What can be done about side effects?
- Is there an option that is less expensive?
- Are there generic drugs?

Before you go Home

- Make sure you understand all instructions
- If it is hard to remember, ask that someone write it down
- Get a follow-up appointment if needed
- Get a phone number that you can call if you have question