



Working collaboratively with your healthcare team is key to ensuring you receive the best possible care tailored to your needs and preferences. When you actively participate in decisions about your health, you become a partner in your treatment journey, which often leads to better outcomes.

Here are some ways to foster open communication with your healthcare team:



- 1 Approach appointments with a clear mind.** It's understandable to feel anxious about a medical diagnosis, but try to focus on making the most of your time with your provider. This focused approach helps ensure your valuable face-to-face time is used wisely.
- 2 Understand Your Treatment Plan.** Don't hesitate to ask questions if you don't fully understand why a medication or test is being recommended. As an informed partner in your healthcare, it's important to speak up for clarification. Your provider wants you to be comfortable and confident with the care plan you've chosen, and that means ensuring you fully understand it.

- 3 Seek clarification when needed.** If your provider uses medical jargon or explains something in an unclear way, politely stop them and ask for clarification. Don't feel embarrassed or shy. Providers may not always realize when an explanation isn't clear or when they have overlooked explaining important details to you. You can even try repeating back what you've heard to confirm your understanding or ask for written materials to review later.



- 4 Be open with your provider about your symptoms and how your condition affects your daily life.** This includes detailing how symptoms impact tasks like cooking, bathing, or dressing, as well as your concentration for reading or work, and your familial and social relationships. Sharing both your physical and emotional well-being helps your provider understand the full extent of what's going on. This comprehensive information is crucial for working together to identify the most effective treatment and fosters a stronger, more informed relationship.
- 5 Ask how your doctor likes to communicate in between appointments.** Do they prefer messages in the patient portal or should you call their office? What is the typical response time to messages? Clarifying upfront about how to contact them with questions or concerns can save a lot of frustration.
- 6 Share your preferred communication style.** When your provider communicates in a way that resonates with you, it feels like they're really listening and caring about your individual needs, not just treating you like every other patient. You'll get information in a way that works for you. Maybe you're a visual learner who benefits from diagrams, or you prefer written summaries you can take home. Some people want all the details about risks and benefits, while others want just the key points. Your provider can adapt if they know your preference.



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**Make sure you understand your next steps before leaving your appointment.** Take a moment to clarify what you need to do moving forward. Will you need to pick up a new prescription from the pharmacy? Should you stop taking any current medications? If your provider wants you to see a specialist, find out who will schedule that appointment for you. It's much easier to ask these questions now than to feel uncertain once you're back home.

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**Take an active role in your care.** Following the treatment plan you've developed together with your provider is important, but don't hesitate to speak up if something isn't working. If you experience unexpected side effects or if a part of the plan doesn't fit your lifestyle or budget, let your provider know right away. Open communication allows both of you to reassess and adjust the plan to better fit your situation.

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**Find the right partnership.** The relationship with your healthcare provider is a partnership. If something doesn't feel right or you're not comfortable with the care you're receiving, it's important to trust those feelings and speak up. Your provider should be someone you trust and feel heard by. If you are unsure about how to find another provider, give your insurance company a call, and they can help with the process of locating other options in your plan's network.

**Patients who are actively engaged in their treatment decisions with their providers as partners in their health have better outcomes. Being a more assertive, informed patient is a great first step toward better health. While your provider has medical knowledge and experience, you know your body better than anyone else. You should work to establish and maintain a partnership with your provider. After all, you are there for the same goal- for you to have a healthy life!**

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