

## How-to Be an Empowered Patient

**You are the expert of your body and mind.** Here are things you can do to get what you want and need for your health.

- **Share your health and health history** with each of your doctors so they can diagnose and treat *you*.
- **Trust your instincts—and find a doctor who trusts them, too.** Your doctor should listen to your concerns, work with you, and support your choices.
- **Get the information you need** before making a medical decision or agreeing to a test or treatment. Get a second opinion.
- **Speak up for yourself!** Tell your health care team what you want and need.
- **Ask questions** when you don't understand something or need more information.

**You know what feels right and what is normal for you.**

If you don't feel right or normal there may be a problem. See a doctor if:

- There's any change in your health
- You feel sick or different
- You see or feel something that you have not seen or felt before
- Don't wait to contact your doctor. Getting care early can help keep any problem from getting worse

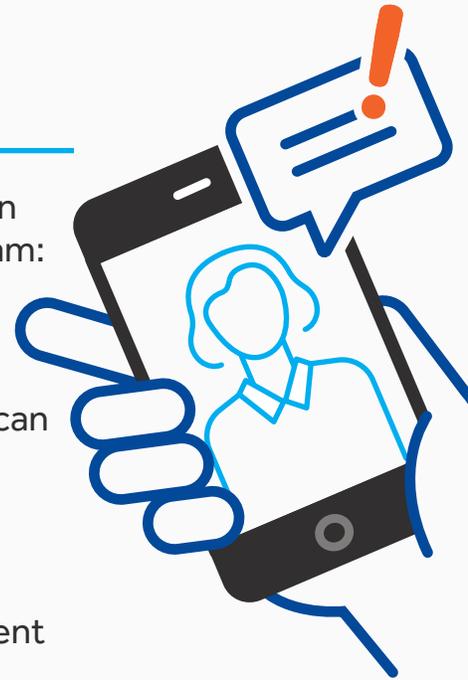


## How-to Put a Health Care Team Together

Taking care of your health is easier with a team of people who can help and support you. Here are tips about who to put on your team:

1. **People you trust and who respect what *you* want.**
2. **Health professionals:** In addition to your doctors, your team can include nurses, office staff, pharmacists, among others.
3. **Care Coordinator (or Professional Caregiver/Aide):** A care coordinator can oversee your health care, help with your appointments and travel, keep you on track with your treatment plan, and more.

If you don't have someone who can do this, look for a support person from a local organization or ask your doctor or a friend for resources.



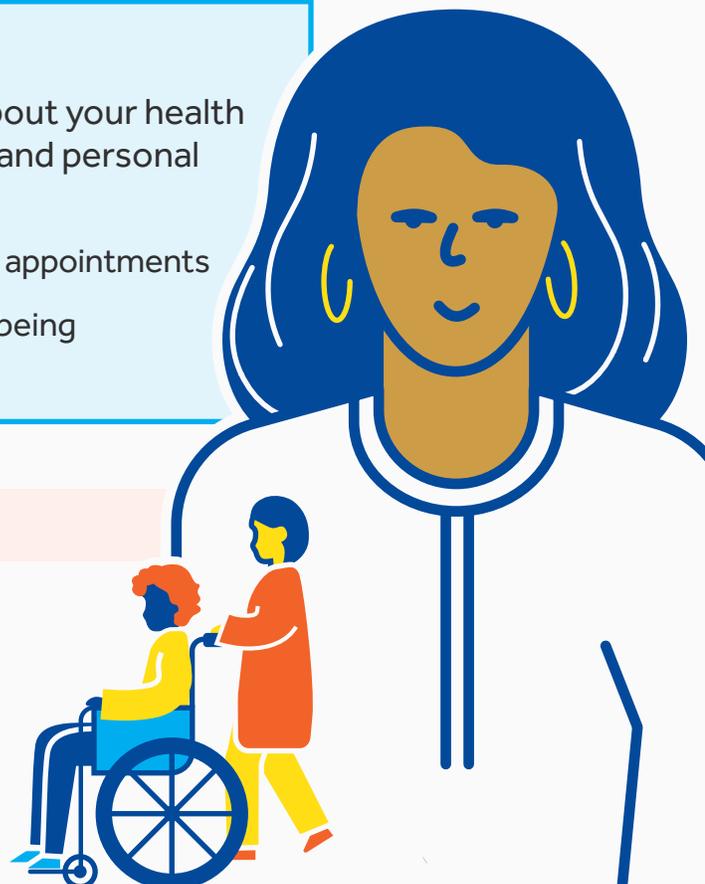
### Help Your Team Help You

Be honest and share important information about your health with your team, including your medication list and personal health record. Tell them:

- What you want from them, such as help making appointments
- What you want from your health care, such as being pain-free or going up steps easily



Ask for help when you need it.



## How-to Get Ready for a Doctor's Visit

Preparing for your doctor's visit can help you make the most out of your time with your doctor and get better health care.

- Start by making a list of:
  - The reasons for your visit and what you want out of it (ex: a prescription, referral)
  - Your questions and concerns
  - What's wrong or what's changed, include:
    - what feels different or worse
    - when you started feeling this way
    - how often you feel this way
- Make sure your insurance covers the visit
- Find out what you need to bring to the visit (ex: lab results)
- Gather everything you need for the visit (ex: medication list, insurance card)

Ask a trusted person to go with you and talk to them about what you want them to do (ex: take notes, ask questions). If no one can go with you, put them on speaker phone or a video call during the visit.



If you don't have someone who can go with you, look for a support person from a local organization or ask your doctor or a friend for resources.



## How-to Get the Most Out of Your Doctor's Visit

### At the start of the visit

- Give your doctor the information you brought to the visit (ex: test results, medication list)
- Correct any wrong information in your records
- Tell your doctor you want to make time in the visit to discuss questions and concerns

### Partner with your doctor to get the care you need

- Tell your doctor the reason for your visit and anything else that is affecting your health
- Be open and honest
- Share things that impact your care (ex: travel issues, costs, caregiving, work schedule, etc.)

### Get information you can understand. Ask your doctor to:

- Explain any words, concepts, or math you don't understand
- Be specific (ex: if told to ice a sore foot, ask how often)
- Use "normal" everyday language
- Use visual aids

**To remember important information:** take notes, record it on your phone, or get online or print resources

### Before you leave the doctor's office, make sure you:

- Understand any instructions and next steps. If you can't do these things, tell your doctor
- Know who to contact if you have questions and how to reach them
- Leave with any prescriptions or paperwork you need



### Use the "Teach-Back" Method to Make Sure You Understand

- To use this method, repeat back what your doctor told or showed you in your own words as if you're teaching them. You can start by saying, "Let me make sure I have this right..."
- Ask the doctor to correct any mistakes or explain the information again if you don't understand something



Use your phone to record the instructions to use later.

## How-to Make Your Own Health Record

A health record can help you manage your health and get good care. To create a health record, break it down into three steps:

### Step 1: Begin by including your:

- Name and contact information
- Birth date
- Contact information for anyone involved in your health care (ex: doctor, aide, friends and family, etc.)
- Pharmacy information
- Insurance information

### Step 2: Include important information about your health:

- Medication list
- Current health status (ex: diabetes, cancer, asthma)
- Disabilities (ex: hearing loss, low vision)
- Allergies or reactions
- On-going therapy (ex: physical, mental health, etc.)
- Prescribed directions (ex: checking daily blood pressure, weight, etc.)
- Special diet or exercise program
- Test results (ex: blood work or an MRI)
- Medical device or implants (ex: a pacemaker or stent)
- Major health events (ex: surgeries, broken bone, childbirth, cancer, etc.)

### Step 3: Include your family health history:

List any diseases or health conditions that are common in your family and who was diagnosed (ex: heart disease: maternal grandfather, sister).



## How-to Make a Medication List

A medication list can help you manage your health and get good care. It can help you take your medications correctly, keep your health care team up-to-date, and avoid allergic reactions or harmful interactions between medications. **Always keep this list with you, it can save your life.**

The more complete your medication list is, the better it is. List everything you take, inhale, inject, apply, etc. This includes prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, infusions, vitamins, supplements, herbs, and remedies.

### Include:

- What you are taking (ex: aspirin)
- How much and dosage (ex: 1 pill, 81mg)
- How often (ex: once a day, as needed)
- When and how (ex: 8am with food)
- Why (ex: headache)
- The name and contact information of the doctor who prescribed it
- Side effects (ex: rash at site of injection, nausea)
- Allergies to medication or equipment (ex: penicillin, latex)

### Ways to Make a Medication List

The best way to make a medication list is what works best for you. You can write it on a piece of paper, take photos of your medication labels, use an app on your phone, or make a spreadsheet. Keep it up-to-date.



Always contact your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions or concerns.

