

Communicating with your healthcare provider

Effective communication between you and your healthcare provider is an essential part of good healthcare. You should feel confident and comfortable in making decisions about your health and managing your condition. However, achieving this is not always easy. Here are some suggestions to help you get the most out of your healthcare appointments.



Before your appointment

Make a longer appointment if the problem you want to discuss is complex, or you need to discuss several issues.

Prepare a summary of your health problems, **prioritise the issues** you want to discuss, and make a list of questions as you think of them.

Let your healthcare provider know if you need an interpreter or other assistance with communicating.



During your appointment

You should expect to be listened to. You should also be given clear and adequate explanations of your condition, any recommended tests, treatment options and the expected results.

When **you describe your problems**, be as accurate, complete and honest as possible.

If your healthcare provider recommends a test, treatment or procedure and you are not clear of its purpose or benefits, you may want to discuss this.

Asking questions can be helpful. For example:

- Do I really need this test/treatment/procedure?
- What are the risks?
- Are there simpler or safer options?
- What happens if I don't do anything?
- What are the costs?

Tell your healthcare provider if you don't understand anything, and ask them to repeat or clarify the information until you do understand.

If you don't feel confident about handling any aspect of the appointment, **take a relative or friend** with you.

Take notes if you think you may have trouble remembering important details (or ask your healthcare provider or support person to take notes for you).

If you want to know more, **ask your healthcare provider** for some written information, or suggestions of where you might find further information.



After your appointment

You may want to **make a follow-up appointment** to ask further questions, discuss continuing issues or talk to your healthcare provider about your decisions after you've had time to consider the options.

If you want to discuss the issues with another healthcare provider, don't hesitate to **get another opinion**.

For more information visit the website:
www.choosingwisely.org.au/#consumers



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