

# Communication with providers

Improving communications with your loved one's medical team is one of the most important things that a caregiver can do. By taking the time to understand your loved one's condition and being prepared for doctor visits, you will make the best use of medical appointments, which may help improve the your loved ones quality of care.

## Why communicate?

Effective communication with providers will help minimize confusion and can ease any concerns about short and long term health expectations.

Caring for someone can be difficult and challenging. You are not alone and the doctors, nurses and assistances are all there to help care for your loved one. Medical and health related issues can be confusing and sometimes providers assume that you may already know about the condition that is being treated.

Here are a few ways that you can improve communications with providers:

- Take time to learn about your loved ones condition before you go to the first office visit. This will help you prepare in advance any questions you may have about the medical condition.
- Find out what services are covered. Call the insurance company to find out specifics about benefits and coverage. You can also talk to the office staff about what costs are included and what costs may be out-of-pocket expenses.
- Learn the routine at the doctor's office. Find out what the general office hours are and how after-hour services are handled. Ask for a business card of the important telephone numbers that you need in order to contact the appropriate people.
- Medical appointments can be overwhelming. The doctors and nurses are part of your team and it is important to avoid venting to them about any frustration you may have.
- Making a list of questions is a great way to maximize your time with the doctor. Be sure to write down any special instructions given by the doctors or nurses during an appointment.
- If medication is prescribed, be sure to ask about any side effects or possible risks associated with the medication.
- If the doctor recommends a test or procedure to be done, ask questions as to why this is being recommended and find out if any alternatives are available.
- Ask the doctor what notes you should take between visits to best help with the care of your loved one.



Being a caregiver takes a full team of people, including doctors, nurses, friends and family. Having a good, open relationship with the doctors and nurses can help make things easier and allows for more open communication in the long-term.

## Resources

**The National Alliance for Caregiving**

[www.caregiving.org](http://www.caregiving.org)

**HelpGuide**

[www.helpguide.org/topics/caregiving.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/topics/caregiving.htm)

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