



# Communicating effectively with your healthcare providers

If you are living with a chronic condition, there's a good chance you'll see your doctor more than most people do. You might have more than one doctor or healthcare provider looking after various aspects of your health.

You're going to get the most benefit from your healthcare if you and your healthcare providers understand any treatments, medicines or tests that have been recommended for you, and how your health has been affected.

## What is good communication?

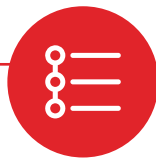
Your doctors and other healthcare providers want the same thing as you – good health. But good health can mean different things to different people. Good communication between you and your healthcare providers ensures you are both on the same page and placing importance on the same goals.

Some important aspects of effective communication include:



### Listening

You and your healthcare provider should take the time to listen and fully appreciate what the other is saying.



### Priorities

It's important to discuss the aspects of your care that are most important to you, to help ensure you and your healthcare provider are working toward the same goals.



### Understanding

Making sure your healthcare provider explains any difficult words or concepts is vital. Likewise, explaining anything that's happening to you clearly and accurately will ensure your healthcare provider understands what you're going through.

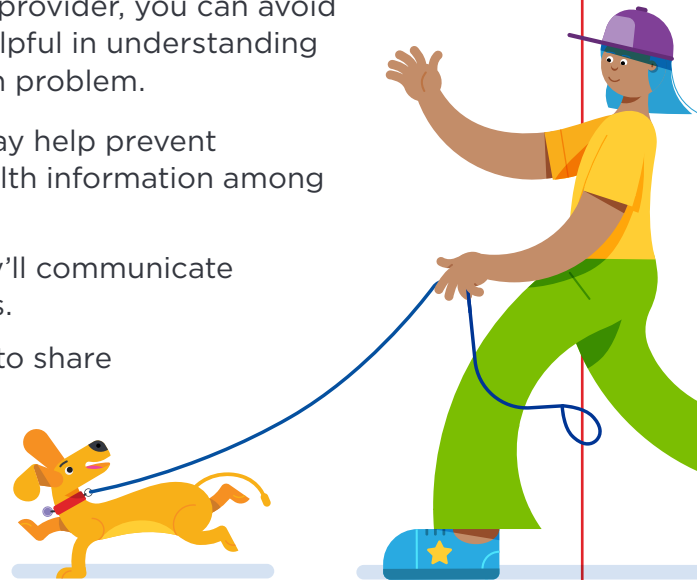
## Coordinating your healthcare providers

It's important your healthcare providers stay up to date with information about your health and the care you have received.

Sometimes your care can be better coordinated if you allow your healthcare providers to speak to each other directly. This means you won't have to worry about repeating information to each healthcare provider, you can avoid having to re-take medical tests, and it can be helpful in understanding which healthcare provider to talk to about which problem.

This can help save time in appointments, and may help prevent misunderstandings. To help coordinate your health information among your healthcare providers:

- Ask who your primary doctor is, and how they'll communicate information to your other healthcare providers.
- Provide consent to your healthcare providers to share information about your care with one another.
- Write down the names of all your healthcare providers, and the role they play in your care. Give each of your healthcare providers a copy of this information.



## Sharing information

Taking an active role when talking to your healthcare providers is very important. While healthcare providers have the best of intentions, they can't read minds.

If your healthcare provider doesn't have all your relevant information, or doesn't know what you want or need, it may be difficult for them to address your health issues and concerns.

Some examples of important information to share with your healthcare providers might be:

- How you are feeling that day.
- Any improvement or worsening since the last visit (you might consider keeping a symptom diary or similar).
- Any changes to the medications you are taking, including over-the-counter medications, or other treatments you are receiving.
- Relevant life changes (e.g. planning a pregnancy, starting a demanding job).

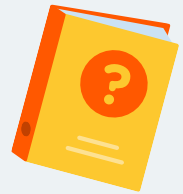




## Asking questions

Asking questions is one of the best ways to ensure that you and your healthcare providers understand each other. It can help to write any questions down before your appointment so you don't forget to ask them.

If there's something you don't understand, it's vital you ask your healthcare provider to explain so you do. Some people find it useful to write the questions and answers down in a notebook for future reference.



## Bring someone to help

It can be helpful to bring a family member, carer or friend along to your appointments, particularly if they're involved in your day-to-day care.

The person you bring should know about your condition, so they understand what you'll be talking about with your healthcare provider.

There are a few reasons why bringing a support person to your appointments can be helpful:

- They may be able to provide additional observations about you and your condition to your healthcare provider.
- They can help you take notes and ask questions during your appointment.
- Your healthcare provider can directly provide them with information that can help you manage your condition.

