



Communicating With Your Doctor

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It is important to continue to communicate with your doctor so you can feel good about your treatment and empowered during your care. However, you may feel awkward or hesitate to ask questions or express your concerns. You may also find it difficult to comprehend some of the information you receive.

The following, therefore, are suggestions that may help you communicate better with your doctor:

- Decide how much information you want to know, and make your doctor aware of it. Many people who are fully informed about their disease and treatment options tend to feel more empowered. However, you may feel overwhelmed by too much information and details, and would rather leave most decisions to your doctor or a family member.
- Keep a record of your medical history, medications and daily routine. Write down your symptoms and any issues you want to discuss with your doctor (i.e., difficulty sleeping, nausea, headaches, depression, etc.). The more your doctor knows about your situation, the better he or she can help you.
NOTE: Forms for tracking medical history, symptoms, medications, etc., are available for free at www.pacsupport.org.
- Ask questions. It helps to make a list of your questions ahead of time. Don't be afraid to speak up if you are having difficulty understanding an explanation, description, or unfamiliar medical terms. Each person's needs are unique, and your questions may change at different points throughout your care.

QUESTION GUIDE - Use the following as a guide to the kind of questions that should be asked:

- A** – *Analysis?* What, exactly, is your condition? How serious is it?
- N** – *Next?* What are the next steps or next treatment options available to you?
- S** – *Side effects?* What side effects are associated with each treatment option?
- W** – *When to treat?* How soon should you make a treatment decision and begin treatments?
- E** – *Expectations?* What are your doctor's expectations? What should you expect ahead?
- R** – *Recommendations?* Does your doctor have any specific recommendations about anything?
- S** – *Second opinions?* What other medical opinions and/or consultations should you pursue?

- Take notes, or ask your doctor if you can tape record the discussion for later review. You can also bring someone with you to the appointment, such as your caregiver, family member or friend, who can offer feedback.
- Ask if there is written information or educational materials (i.e., books, pamphlets, videos, etc.) that you can take home with you. Ask for referrals to psychological, financial, and/or spiritual support resources. Find out when is the best time to call if you have questions.
- Make sure that you obtain all names and contact information that would be helpful now or might be needed later.

*This information is neither intended nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical guidance.
Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider prior to making decisions about your medical care.*