

Taking charge of your healthcare:
your path to being an empowered patient.

<http://www.patientsafety.org/page/transtoolkit/>

Talking to Your Doctor or Nurse

Whether you talk to your doctor or nurse in an office, in the hospital, or over the telephone, be prepared. Plan what to ask or do before, during, and at the end of each visit or conversation. In the office or hospital, try to have an advocate with you, a trusted friend or family member who can take notes, who knows what medications you are taking, and who can remind you of questions to ask the doctor if you forget.

Before you go

- Write down your questions in advance. It is often hard to remember what we want to ask when we are in the office.
- Write down the name and dose of each prescription and over-the-counter medicine you take. (Go to http://www.ntocc.org/Portals/0/My_Medicine_List.pdf for more information.)
- Write down the name and dose taken of each supplement or herbal medicine you take. (Go to http://www.ntocc.org/Portals/0/My_Medicine_List.pdf for more information.)

OR

- Put in a bag all bottles of prescription and over-the-counter medicines and supplements you take, in their original containers, to show the doctor or nurse. Tell your doctor or nurse if how you use them is different from the instructions on the label.
- Organize the copies of your medical records and other documents you plan to take with you so you can lay your hands on what you need to look at and discuss with your medical team – quickly.

When you go

- Take a notebook to each appointment.
- Tell the doctor and nurse about your most important problems first. They have a limited amount of time at each visit.
- Tell each of your doctors and nurses about prescription and over-the-counter medicines you are taking.
- Tell your main doctor and nurse about any other doctors who are taking care of you.
- Write down the doctor's and nurse's answers to your questions, or ask your advocate to write them down.

Ask Me Three™

Developed by Partnership for Clear Health Communication at the National Patient Safety Foundation.

Ask your doctor or nurse the following three questions. Write down the answers:

1. What is my main problem? _____

2. What do I need to do? _____

3. Why is it important for me to do this? _____

Before you leave

- Ask the doctor or nurse to repeat anything you do not understand.
- Repeat the instructions back to them **in your own words**. This will help you remember what to do when you get home. It will also help the doctor and nurse know whether you understand.
- Do not leave the office without having all your questions answered.
- Make your next appointment before you leave the office.
- Tell the nurse if:
 - You are still unsure about what the doctor said.
 - You need help making an appointment with a specialist.
 - You need a referral to a social services agency or mental health professional for help with:
 - **Transportation** to doctor appointments
 - **Paying** for medicines or supplies
 - **Arranging** for home care
 - **Obtaining** special equipment, such as a cane, wheelchair, walker, commode, or hospital bed
 - **Dealing** emotionally with your medical condition

For more information

- **Ask Me Three™** / http://www.npsf.org/askme3/for_patients.php
- **My Medicines List** / http://www.ntocc.org/Portals/0/My_Medicine_List.pdf
- **Questions are the Answer** / <http://www.ahrq.gov/questionsaretheanswer/>