

Ways to Advocate for Yourself

Speaking up for what you want and need is called advocating for yourself.

And advocating for yourself is something you can do on your own health journey to help you get the care and attention you need and deserve.

Here's how to do it.

One. Prepare for your visit.

Whenever possible, start by finding a doctor or health care professional you're comfortable with.

Next, make a list of any surgeries, health conditions, and allergies you have. Also list any medicines, vitamins, and supplements you take.

If you have recently been diagnosed with a condition, it may help to learn as much as you can about it before your visit.

And remember to write down any questions you have. Keep in mind your doctor may ask you to schedule a follow-up visit to discuss some of your questions further.

By the way, if you have questions that can't wait until your next visit, it's okay to call your doctor's office to ask those questions sooner.

Two. Be honest and direct.

Clearly explain the reason for your visit. Share your past experiences with your issue and how it affects your life now.

Three. Ask for what you need. And speak up if you don't understand something.

For example, you can ask your doctor to say something again in a different way to help you understand better.

You can also ask your doctor about how you can learn more about your condition, an upcoming test, or procedure.

You can ask your doctor to help in other ways too.

For example, you can ask for a wheelchair or for help getting onto the exam table.

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Or you can let the doctor know if you can't hear them well.

You can also ask for handouts in larger print or in a different language.

And you can ask for an interpreter who can speak a language you feel more comfortable using.

Four. Know your rights as a patient.

This includes your right to what's called "informed consent."

That means your doctor needs to give you enough information to help you make decisions about your treatment.

This includes the risks and benefits, and what all of your options are. All this information helps you choose the best care option for you.

Now, you can also tell your doctor if you're not comfortable with their treatment plan or recommendations.

Your feelings and values are important and are part of any decision you'll make.

Know that you can always change doctors or care providers if you don't feel comfortable.

Five. Think about having a family member or friend join you during your appointment.

They can help you by taking notes, asking questions to clarify information, and helping you to remember what your doctor says.

Remember, you know your body best. And you have the right to speak up for what you want and need when it comes to your health.