



Communicating with your Healthcare Team

Top Tips to Partner with Professionals!

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Medical Resume

This is a 1 - 2-page document summarizing all your pertinent medical information, including all the items listed below. Have this resume in an electronic file so you can easily update the document.

- List of all your medications, including names, dosages, and how often they are taken. Be sure to include vitamins / herbs, ear / eye drops, medications put directly on the skin and nasal medications. Many medical offices request you bring the actual bottles.
- List of all your healthcare professionals, including their specialties and phone numbers
- List of your personal and family medical histories, including illnesses and operations.
- List of allergies, if any. If you do have allergies carefully describe exactly what you experienced.
- Emergency contact information
- Insurance information

Preparing for your Visit

- Bring your medical resume!
- Write down your story. Instead of thinking about your individual symptoms, think about your story. Write your story in chronological order, noting when symptoms occurred. Also note if you did anything that helped relieve the pain, such as taking an over-the-counter medication or lying down. This process of sharing your story will help your healthcare team more accurately determine the issues.
- Write down your questions and leave space to write the answers. Bring a clipboard or pad of paper with cardboard backing. You want these types of items in case you must take notes on your lap!
- Take a family member or friend along. Medical issues can be overwhelming, and we can easily miss important information when we experience stress.
- Internet Research. There is wonderful information on the Internet, but there are also many health-related websites that have misleading and false information. Items to consider:
 - Is the site selling something, such as special drinks or vitamins? The site might be valid, but selling items is always a red flag for biased information.
 - Type of site designation. The “.gov” and “.edu” health websites offer excellent evidenced based information. Nearly all “.org” health sites are excellent, but because anyone can get a “.org” site look carefully at the site contents. There are many wonderful “.com” health sites, but because they are commercial sites, they carry the highest risk for biased and false information.

Having “Marvelous Meetings” with Healthcare Professionals

It’s OK to be Assertive. It is important to understand these three words:

- Passive: only focusing on the needs of others
- Assertive: partnering with people to meet your needs and their needs
- Aggressive: only focusing on the needs of yourself

Follow the ABC Rule (“Always Be Courteous”). Some healthcare professionals could be quite challenging, but it is vital we always stay pleasant. When I have an issue with another healthcare professional, I always start out by saying, “With all due respect, I feel ...” Also, courteous does not mean passive; you can be nice and still get the information you need.

Share your research. Healthcare professionals are science-oriented research people. If you feel another treatment would be better, have documentation that backs up your views, such as articles from reputable medical journals. Saying, “My neighbor told me eating radishes will help with

Medical jargon. Healthcare professionals are notorious for using medical terms and not properly explaining. If a professional uses language you do not understand, there is right way and a wrong way to handle the situation. The right way is to politely say, “I am not familiar with that word, could you please explain it to me.” The wrong way is, is to say, for example, “I don’t know what you are talking about! Stop using all those big words I don’t understand!”

Use “I” language, not “You” language. If there is a conflict, there are two possible communication options. The “I” language version is much friendlier and does not make the professional defensive.

- “I” language Example: “I feel this test would be helpful based on the newest research. I would like to discuss having the test ordered.”
- “You” language Example: “You better order the test!”

Summarize. After meeting with a healthcare professional, summarize what was discussed to be sure you know exactly what to do. This process is vital, especially in complicated cases with multiples medical issues.

Conflicts with Professionals

If you feel your healthcare professional isn’t meeting your needs, the ideal scenario would be to respectfully discuss the issue directly with the person. If you don’t feel comfortable doing this directly, there are options.

- Medical practice: ask to speak with the practice manager.
- Hospital: speak to the ombudsman or a patient advocate.

If you feel the professional isn’t for you, of course, then it is time to search for a new professional. Do not leave your current professional until you have a new professional lined up!