

It is often the caregiver that assembles questions and reaches out to the doctor on behalf of their loved one. Talk with your loved one about how they want you to communicate with the health care team. Many people with cancer prefer to take the lead on communication. Others prefer that their family or caregivers have a large role in communicating. Support your loved one by meeting with the health care team to ask questions, in a way that also respects the doctor's time. Being upfront about how your loved one feels and what you both do or don't understand, helps the team provide the best care.



www.CancerSupportCommunity.org
1-888-793-9355



The relationship with the health care team is one of the most important aspects of cancer treatment. It is also important that you and your loved one understand medical terms and treatment options. Your loved one has the right to make choices, whether or not the doctor agrees with them. Sometimes the doctor does not act with respect, repeatedly shows impatience with questions, or does not consider opinions. It can be helpful to consider getting a second opinion from another provider or even change doctors. You and your loved one must communicate clearly with the health care team so they can understand needs and expectations.

One way to improve communication with the health care team is to prepare for visits. There are a few things you and your loved one can do to make sure the doctor has a clear understanding of the discussion and next steps.

- **Take notes.** Using one notebook is a great way to keep organized and stay clear on what was said throughout treatment. It is often helpful for the caregiver or another family member to be in charge of note-taking.
- **Make a list of questions and concerns to discuss with the health care team.** Remember to refer to it from the beginning of the appointment.
- **Don't save difficult questions for the end of the visit.** Let them know up front that you have a concern so you can make the most of your time together.
- **Write down information about new medications or changes in the treatment plan.** Once the doctor is done, read the notes back to the doctor or nurse. This will help catch any information you may have missed or didn't understand.

- **Ask to discuss other treatment options** if you have concerns. These concerns may include your loved one being able to comply with or tolerate a specific treatment.
- **Talk with the nurse, oncology social worker, or patient navigator** if there are concerns about communicating with the doctor. They may have suggestions to help improve the conversation.

Communicating when you are stressed is never easy—especially as a caregiver. You and your loved one have likely learned about many new words, tests, and treatments related to cancer. The health care team recognizes this and want to work with your loved one so that they can cope with their cancer.

General Cancer Information, Survivorship & Support

Cancer Support Community • 888-793-9355 • www.CancerSupportCommunity.org

American Cancer Society • 800-227-2345 • www.cancer.org

CancerCare • 800-813-4673 • www.cancercare.org

Cancer.net • 888-651-3038 • www.cancer.net

Caregiver Action Network • 855-227-3640 • www.caregiveraction.org

Healthcare.gov • www.healthcare.gov

Livestrong Foundation • 866-673-7205 • www.livestrong.org

National Cancer Institute • 800-422-6237 • www.cancer.gov

National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine • 888-644-6226 • www.nccam.nih.gov

Patient Advocate Foundation • 800-532-5274 • www.patientadvocate.org

Cancer Support Community Resources

Cancer Support Community's (CSC) resources and programs are available free of charge. Call 888-793-9355 or visit www.CancerSupportCommunity.org for more info.

Cancer Support Helpline® — Have questions, concerns or looking for resources? Call CSC's toll-free Cancer Support Helpline (888-793-9355), available in 200 languages Mon–Fri, 9 am–9 pm ET.

Open to Options® — Preparing for your next appointment? Our trained specialists can help you create a list of questions to share with your doctor. Make an appointment by calling 888-793-9355 or by contacting your local CSC or Gilda's Club.

Frankly Speaking About Cancer® — Trusted information for cancer patients and their loved ones is available through publications, online, and in-person programs. www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/FranklySpeakingAboutCancer.

Services at Local CSCs and Gilda's Clubs — With the help of 170 locations, CSC and Gilda's Club affiliates provide services free of charge to people touched by cancer. Attend support groups, educational sessions, wellness programs, and more at a location near you. www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/FindLocation.

MyLifeLine — CSC's private, online community allows patients and caregivers to easily connect with friends and family to receive social, emotional, and practical support throughout the cancer journey and beyond. Connect with other caregivers by joining the Caregiver Support online discussion board. Sign up at www.MyLifeLine.org.

Grassroots Network — Make sure your voice is heard by federal and state policy makers on issues affecting cancer patients and survivors by joining our Network at www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/become-advocate.

Cancer Experience Registry® — Help others by sharing your cancer patient or cancer caregiver experience via survey at www.CancerExperienceRegistry.org.

The Cancer Support Community provides this information as a service. This publication is not intended to take the place of medical care or the advice of your doctor. We strongly suggest consulting your doctor or other health care professionals to answer questions and learn more.

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