



Communication Checklist

Here is a simple checklist of some things you can do to help build an effective partnership with your doctor.

Before Your Visit

- Write down a list of specific questions. Make sure to list the most important ones first. Please bring a copy to give to your physician at the appointment.
- Get to know your medical history, so that you can convey it concisely to your doctor.
- Write out a brief summary to give to your physician and other providers.
- Keep a symptom diary to track your symptoms and concerns. Bring it along with your list of questions to show to your doctor.
- List the medications you are taking with the current dosage and share any changes in your medications with your doctor.
- Notify your oncologist (or the scheduler) ahead of time if you think you will need more time to discuss your questions. This will allow the staff to extend your appointment if needed.

During Your Visit

- Bring a family member or good friend to take notes for you.
 - Bring a pen and notebook so that you can take notes.
 - Tape-record your visit so you can listen to it again later.
 - California law requires all parties to know they are being recorded, so be sure and tell your doctor you would like to make a recording so you can better remember what he or she tells you.

(over)

- Keep the discussion focused on the main reasons for your visit, making sure to cover your main questions and concerns, your symptoms and how they are impacting your life.
- Ask for clarification if you don't understand what you have been told or if you still have questions.
- Ask for explanations of treatment goals and side effects.
- Many oncologists work closely with other team members. Be sure to ask if there is anyone else you should meet with.
- Let your doctor know if you are seeing other doctors or health care providers.
- Share information about any recent medical tests you have done.
- Let your doctor know how much information you want and if you have religious or cultural beliefs that will affect the type of treatment you want to get.
- Stand up for yourself or have a friend or family member advocate for you if you think your concerns are not addressed.
- Balance assertiveness with friendliness and understanding.

For additional information or resources, please visit the Cancer Resource Center at 1600 Divisadero Street on the first floor, or call at (415) 885-3693. If you need help prioritizing your questions you might ask about the Next Steps program. The information in this publication is designed for educational purposes only and is not intended to replace the advice of your physician or health care provider, as each patient's circumstances are individual. We encourage you to discuss with your physician any questions and concerns that you may have.