

Communicating About Your Health

Communicating about your health means sharing details about your health, such as your heart rate, blood pressure, and any new symptoms, with your doctor. It also means asking your doctor questions and talking about your health choices with people you trust.

Why Is Communication Important?



Find Problems Early: Checking your health regularly can help find problems before they get worse.

Better Care: Sharing your health info with your doctor helps them give you the right care.

Manage Health Issues: If you have a long-term health issue, keeping track can help you stay healthy and avoid problems.

Stay Involved: Knowing about your health can keep you more involved, help you follow your doctor's advice, or know when you need to seek advice from a different doctor.

Ways to Communicate About Your Health

- **Talk to Your Doctor:** Share how you feel and any symptoms during check-ups.
- **Use a Patient Portal:** Send messages or questions to your healthcare provider online.
- **Bring My Health Report to Appointments:** Show your doctor notes about your symptoms or daily health.
- **Use a Medical Alert Device:** Send an emergency signal if you need immediate help.

- **Call Your Healthcare Provider:** Discuss health concerns over the phone.
- **Email Your Doctor:** Write messages to your doctor about your health.
- **Share Data from Health Apps:** Let your doctor see information from apps that track your health.
- **Talk to a Nurse or Health Coach:** Get advice and share health updates with healthcare professionals.
- **Use Telemedicine:** Have video calls with your doctor to discuss your health.
- **Bring Family Members to Appointments:** A family member can take notes during your appointment and help explain your health issues to the doctor.
- **Use a Privacy Release Form:** Allow your doctor to share your health information with other people like your family or other doctors. Sometimes this is called a HIPAA Release Form. It lets someone you choose see your health records and talk with your doctors. You can decide how much information will be shared, how often, and in what format. HIPAA is a federal law that protects your health information from being shared without your permission.
- **Use Communication Devices:** Use tools like tablets, smartphones or cards with health-related pictures, symbols, letters or words to share health information.
- **Use Electronic Health Records (EHR):** Access and share your health information stored online with your doctor. Many healthcare practices or organizations use electronic health records. Some let you make notes in your health record. Ask your provider if you can do this. Learn to use the patient portal to see your records and talk with your provider.

Resources

“Making My Own Healthcare Decisions” is a letter that you can write to your doctors explaining how they can help you make decisions. You can download the letter from [The Arc’s website](#).

[Ask Me Three – Good Questions for Your Good Health](#) is a simple way to communicate with your doctors to better understand your health conditions and what you need to do to stay healthy.

At the [Widgit Health](#) website you can find many free resources to help you communicate about your healthcare, dental care, medications, and emergencies.

At the [Pathfinders for Autism](#) website you can find visual supports for hospital and doctor visits.

[My Health Report](#) is a document that you can use to organize important information you want to share during an appointment. [My Health Passport](#) is a document that describes your supports, preferences, and other important information about you to help your doctors know you better. Both are available at the [Florida Center for Inclusive Communities](#) website.

The [H-CARDD](#) website has tools for communicating important information in a health care setting. They can be used by self-advocates, supporters and health professionals.

Download a copy of North Carolina’s Privacy (or HIPAA) Release Form at the [NC Health and Human Services](#) website

Get Started with Communicating About Your Health

Step 1. Review the suggested resources above.

Step 2. Decide what you want to know about your health.

Step 3. Ask your doctor what they want to know about your health.

Step 4. Talk with your doctor and other people you trust about ways to communicate about about your health.