

30 Minutes to Better Care

Key tips that can make a big difference.



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2



Today's Plan

Achieving the best care is not as simple as having the best facilities and the brightest medical team.

Quick tips

How you can make a big difference to the quality of your care: how to get the best out of our best!

Q&A – Let's talk!



TOP Tips!

1

Take Someone With You

Having a companion, your “Care Partner” at medical appointments, and during a hospital stay, can provide support and help you take notes, remember important information, and coordinate your care

2

Prepare For Every Doctor's Appointment

It's a meeting where every minute counts. Create your agenda, know your priorities, write your questions, take notes and take someone with you! (Even via phone!)

3

Get a Second Opinion: Every Diagnosis, Treatment

About 15% of diagnoses are incorrect, and up to 30% of recommended surgeries are unnecessary. Don't hesitate to get another professional opinion from an independent doctor, *not your doctor's referral*.

4

Speak up for Plain Speak

Don't understand anything? Ask questions!



How to Manage Your Care

1 **Accept: You are your own quarterback for care** (find someone to help you)

With many specialists involved, ensure your care is well-coordinated between all of them. *Never assume they talk to each other or even share your records. Good communication prevents mistakes, helps ensure you get the best treatments and more...!*

2 **Know your costs, discuss costs frankly**

Speak up about medication expenses. You can ask for affordable options. For every test, ask: *Is this "need to know?" or "nice to know."*

- Know your insurance coverages
- If necessary, get help understanding your policy, its benefits, and limitations.

3 **Trust, but verify**

Do your homework. Vet your doctors and hospitals. Know the integrity and quality you're getting. Use **HospitalSafetyGrade.org** and **HospitalCompare.gov** to check out hospital track records.



Be Pro-Active

Speak Up for Help

We get by with a little help from our friends!

Numerous studies show: patients forget up to 80% of what doctors tell them... that's normal! Don't hesitate to ask for assistance when needed. A second pair of eyes and ears is valuable!

Ask Questions Until You Feel Crystal Clear!

If you're worried, confused, or unsure about anything, speak up and ask for clarification. Remember, you can ask your doctors to slow down, speak in "everyday" words. (Doctor doesn't respect your questions? Get another doc!)

Track Details

Take good notes, list your questions. Stay on top of your patient portal. Correct errors. Be sure your doctors know all your diagnoses & medication —the "whole you."

Free Checklists for More Info and to Help You Remember!

www.TheCarePartnerProject.org



Little known fact: up to 40% of diagnoses are incorrect. That's why it's so important to ask a lot of questions and see at least two different doctors for information and treatment choices.

Getting the right diagnosis is often like solving a mystery, and it's really up to the patient and their Care Partner to dig for clues and answers. It can take lots of doctor visits and lots of research, but it's worth the time and effort.

Patients often worry that they will offend their main doctors if they get second or third opinions. This concern is common and understandable, but here's the truth: good doctors encourage their patients to collect as much information as they can —they know from experience that the more information, the better any health care decisions.

Don't give up—remember, two heads are better than one! (And if your doctor is not on board with your getting different opinions, maybe it's time to give up on that doctor!)

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HOW TO HELP

CONFIRM YOUR DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT OPTIONS:

The following questions cover important topics. Add your own! Be sure to ask the same questions of every doctor to compare "apples to apples."



QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- ☐ **What does my diagnosis mean?** (What is my problem? What do I have?)
 - Ask for the "medical name," and then for a "regular way" to describe it.
 - What else could it be?
- ☐ **How serious is this condition?** On a 1-5 scale with "1" being "No worries, easy to treat/cure/live with" and a "5" meaning it's "life threatening and must be treated immediately."
 - Why? What is your reasoning?
- ☐ **How would you treat me** for this condition?
- ☐ **What other ways** are used to treat this condition?
- ☐ **What are the benefits** of each way to treat this condition?
- ☐ **What are the risks** or complications for each way to treat my condition?
 - How common are the risks and complications?
 - What are the immediate, medium-term, and long-term side effects?
- ☐ **Are there other discomforts** associated with the treatments?
 - Are these permanent or temporary?
 - How can these discomforts be treated?
- ☐ **How long will treatment last?**
- ☐ **How long** before I can get back to my normal activities?
- ☐ **What is my short-item outlook post-treatment?**
- ☐ **Are there long-term concerns** or effects of this condition and treatment?
- ☐ **What are my costs?**
- ☐ **What are my options** if I can't afford treatment?



There is no such thing as "routine surgery." Even the most common operations have risks, and ALL are a risk for infection.

When surgery is recommended, and it's not urgent, here's how you, as a Care Partner, can help your loved one increase their chances for the best possible outcome.

Get independent 2nd or 3rd opinions from doctors who don't know one another. (Some doctors are reluctant to disagree with a doctor who's a friend.)

Talk to Board Certified doctors known to—

- Take time to listen and respond to patients' questions and concerns. You may have to "ask around" for suggestions from your friends and family.
- Operate in a highly-rated hospital.

Use these helpful and reliable sources to find hospital ratings:

- Hospital Safety Grade
- Hospital Compare

As always, go to every doctor appointment and take good notes for your loved one.

CARE PARTNER, YOUR HELP IS INVALUABLE!

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HOW TO HELP

GET GOOD INFO FOR MAKING A DECISION ABOUT SURGERY:

KNOW THE RISKS:

Explore Options and Possible Alternatives to Surgery



- ☐ **Try to go to all doctor visits** with your loved one.
- ☐ **Help your loved one prepare a good list of topics** to cover with every doctor consulted, starting with your loved one's goals and priorities! Examples to consider:
 - "Wellness wishes"—your loved one's vision, hopes and priorities for quality of life after surgery (or any alternative treatment that might be offered)
 - Concerns or fears about the recommended surgery
 - The pros and cons of the recommended surgery
- ☐ **Some questions to consider asking:**
 - Is surgery the only choice?
 - What are some alternatives to surgery? (For every alternative), what are the results compared to surgery?
 - What if I put off surgery for awhile? (Pros and cons?)
 - What if I decided not to have this surgery at all? (Pros and cons?)
 - What are my costs for surgery (and any alternative treatment options)?
 - What if I can't afford surgery or other treatments
 - How do I know what my insurance will cover?
 - How much time would I miss from work?
 - Would I need to have help at home during recovery?
 - What would my medications cost?
 - Would I need physical or occupational therapy? Wound care?
 - What resources are available to help with costs?



- ☐ **Urge your loved one to ask as many questions**—of as many doctors—as needed in order to feel comfortable making a decision. Use our "How-To" Checklist for planning help during your loved one's recovery.



HOW TO HELP

PREPARE FOR EVERY MEETING WITH YOUR DOCTOR:

A little prep before your doctor appointment—office or online telehealth—can make all the difference in your quality of care. Regardless of the type of appointment, make every minute count! Take time to prepare:

- ☐ **A written agenda:**
 - Your goals for meeting (in priority order).
 - Your questions and concerns (in priority).
 - Notes on how you feel physically and emotionally.

You can email this agenda to your doctor in advance or upload to their portal, if you wish. Call the office to let them know your agenda is there.

Make copies to take with you—for yourself, the doctor, and anyone who goes with you.

- ☐ **A list of all current and recent medications:**
 - Prescription medicines.
 - Non-prescription medicines.
 - Vitamins and supplements.
 - Herbal remedies.
 - Vaccination history.
 - Details of tobacco, alcohol, or recreational drug use.



Download our **Medications Record** form to make keeping track of your medications a cinch.

- ☐ **Your medical history:**
 - Chronic/ongoing medical conditions or symptoms.
 - Hospitalizations (why, date, and outcome).
 - Surgeries (type, date, and outcome).
 - Allergies.

This information may be on your electronic portal. However, it is always a good idea to have it at your fingertips. Your doctor may not have had time to review it before meeting with you – and portals can have errors! (Check your portal regularly and make sure errors are corrected.)



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HOW TO PREPARE FOR EVERY MEET





The Care Partner Project

Know what professional patient advocates know

How to support your loved ones' medical care

Let's Talk!

?

What's on Your Mind

Topics today or any other
health care concerns!



THE CARE PARTNER
PROJECT™

Thank You!

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More Topics!

In person, or ZOOM. Just call or drop me a note to learn more.



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