

# Can We Talk...

## About What Matters to Me?

Five Tips to Help You Communicate Your Needs and Priorities to Your Healthcare Team



### 1. Tell your doctor and healthcare team about you as a person.

Share a few details about the things that are most important to you. Are you a parent? What do you do in your free time that brings you joy? Talk about your day-to-day activities that describe who you are outside of your illness and how those activities make you feel. These non-medical details are helpful to share so your healthcare team can provide you with the best possible care.

### 2. Write down what is most concerning to you and share that information with your doctor.

It's more helpful to your doctor that you are direct and honest about your hopes and concerns since it may influence your treatment and your overall healing and well-being. Some things to consider: Do you feel that you have the help and support you need at home? Are you concerned about the costs of your care or the medications you may need? Your circumstances and priorities may change over time, so continue to raise your concerns to the people caring for you so they can help support you and meet your needs while making necessary adjustments along the way.

### 3. Come prepared for your appointments.

Before your appointment, think about what you want to say to explain why you are seeing your doctor today. Write down the things that matter most to you, that is concerning you, and the key questions you may have so you can hand them to your doctor as part of your appointment. It also helps to bring a list of current medications you are taking for your medical conditions. In addition, if you are experiencing pain, symptoms or other distress, keep a daily log of when they occur and record the severity and how they interfere with your activities, so that you can share with your healthcare team. Having a friend or family member with you can also be helpful because they can listen, take notes, help you remember details about how you feel at home, and be your advocate to get responsive care.

### 4. Talk about what you are experiencing and feeling.

Know that your experience living with your condition as well as any concerns or barriers you may be confronting are valid and necessary for your healthcare team to know how to best provide you with optimal and personalized care. This includes telling your healthcare team whether you are able to take your medications as they have been prescribed, whether you have transportation challenges in getting to appointments, and whether you may be struggling to keep up with living expenses because of your illness.

### 5. Tell your doctor how you prefer to receive information.

Discuss communication expectations between you and your doctor, particularly regarding how you prefer to receive medical and other information related to your condition. For example, some people like to hear all the facts and statistics, while others prefer only a summary of the key points. In every case, your doctor and care team should listen to you and your concerns without speaking over you. Having an open dialogue with your doctor about your expectations for communicating information and talking about your biggest concerns will help build a stronger relationship that will ultimately lead to a better care plan.

For more patient and caregiver resources, please go to [npaf.org/can-we-talk](https://npaf.org/can-we-talk)