

Communicating with Your Healthcare Team

Hearing that you or a loved one has cancer is overwhelming and stressful, but there are tips and tools to help you adjust to and deal in the best way possible with this diagnosis. One way to begin is to make sure you and your healthcare team understand each other and that you are an active team member. Everyone is there to work with you, so you need to clearly say what you need from them. By communicating well with your healthcare team, you stand to be as successful as possible in this situation. Some tips to keep in mind:

- **Speak openly and honestly with your team.** They need information from you to make sure your needs are addressed.
- **Make sure your doctor listens and understands your needs and concerns.** Don't be afraid to speak up if you don't think you are being understood. To make sure you've been understood, it is often helpful to repeat back to the doctor what you understood him/her to say.
- **Ask questions and gather information.** Make sure you understand what was said and that you have the best information to make decisions.
- **Make a plan with your team for your treatment and care.** Getting that plan in writing or electronic form is ideal but not always possible in every situation. Knowing what to expect can help you feel more at ease and able to address issues better as they arise.

Problem-Solving with Your Healthcare Team

It's important that you feel comfortable with your healthcare team. They have your best interests in mind. Occasionally there is not a good personality fit, there is difficulty communicating, or an issue arises. Part of advocating for yourself is taking steps to problem solve when needed so you feel confident you are getting the best care possible.

- **Share your concerns with a trusted family member or friend.** They may be able to look at the situation more objectively and offer helpful feedback.
- **Have an honest conversation with the person before the matter escalates.** It's possible it can be talked through with a positive outcome.
- If you have a good rapport with someone else on your healthcare team, **express your concerns** to them. They might be able to provide some clarity on the situation, handle the problem directly, or suggest ways to solve it.
- **Sometimes speaking with other cancer survivors** who may have experienced similar situations can offer insight and remedies.
- **If all else fails, consider changing medical providers.**