

Speak Up & Be Heard: A Patient's Guide to Advocacy

Healthcare can be overwhelming—and unfortunately, patients aren't always heard. This guide gives you practical tools to take control of your care and make your voice count.

Before Your Appointment

- Write down your symptoms, questions, and concerns.
- Bring someone you trust to take notes or speak up with you.
- Request an interpreter or accommodations if needed.
- Know your goals: Are you looking for a diagnosis, a test, a referral?

During the Appointment

- Ask for explanations in plain language. → “Can you explain that in simpler terms?”
- Take notes or ask for written summaries.
- Repeat back what you heard to confirm understanding. → “So what I hear you saying is...”
- Speak up if something doesn't feel right. → “I'm not comfortable with that—can we talk about other options?”

After the Appointment

- Review notes and follow through on next steps.
- Use a portal or call the office if you forgot to ask something.
- Get a second opinion if you're unsure or uncomfortable.
- Track symptoms and responses to treatments.

Advocacy Checklist & Speak-Up Scripts

Before Your Visit:

- ☐ Write down top 3 concerns
- ☐ Prepare questions
- ☐ Bring a support person
- ☐ Gather records or test results

During the Visit:

- ☐ Ask for plain-language explanations
- ☐ Take notes or request summaries
- ☐ Confirm your understanding
- ☐ Speak up if something feels off

Speak-Up Scripts:

“Can you explain that in simpler terms?”

“What are my options for treatment?”

“I’m not sure I understand—can you clarify?”

“That doesn’t feel right to me. Are there alternatives?”

Personal Notes & Questions:
