



Caregiver Bulletin

Health Care Advocacy

Did You Know?

As a caregiver, you play an important role as health care advocate for the person you support.

As a health care advocate, your role includes:

- Sharing clear information about the person's medical history and current health needs.
- Helping medical providers understand and communicate directly with the person you support.
- Helping the person you support understand information that medical providers share.
- Asking questions and taking notes.
- Making sure the person's wishes are respected.

Health care advocacy leads to better services.



Ask Questions



Share Information



Include the Person

Learn More

[John Hopkins Medicine—The Power of a Health Care Advocate](#)

[National Caregivers Library – Speaking Out](#)

[Caring Healthcare—Prepare for the Doctor's Appointment: Tips for Caregivers](#)

[National Institutes of Health—Doctor's Appointments: Tips for Caregivers](#)



Washington State
Department of Social
& Health Services

Transforming lives

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Tips for Visits and Emergency Care

Medical visits and treatment can be stressful for you and the person you support. Follow these simple steps to help make the most of each visit.

Before Visits

- Make a list of symptoms and concerns, starting with the most important.
- Make a list of medications (both prescription and over-the-counter). Include the dosage and schedule.
- Gather information about medical history:
 - Health conditions and diagnoses
 - Surgeries
 - Allergies
 - Dietary restrictions and health habits
 - Family medical history of heart disease, diabetes and cancer

During Visits

- Include the person. Ask the doctor to speak directly to them.
- Provide clear information about the person's symptoms, medical history and current needs.
- Ask questions and speak up if you have concerns or confusion. It's OK to ask the provider to explain things a different way.

After Visits

- Watch for side effects from medication or a medical condition.
- Share information about the visit with other caregivers.
- If you haven't heard back from the doctor about a test, call to ask about the results.



Questions to Ask

- What are the side effects of medication?
- Is the new medication OK to take with other prescriptions?
- Where can I find more information?
- What are some other treatments?
- What should we watch out for?
- Who do I call if we have questions or something new comes up?
- How do we know if a reaction is needs emergency care?
- What happens next?

Emergency Care

First responders and emergency medical staff are meeting the person you support for the first time. Your advocacy lessens the risk of harmful mistakes and death.

- Bring a list of medications and current conditions or disability.
- Help the person communicate their symptoms.
- Explain what's typical (baseline) and what's new and concerning.
- Ask for clear explanations and what to expect.
- Be alert to sensory stress. If possible, bring headphones, ask for a quiet room and dim lighting.

