



Full Version 3. Know Your Health Plan

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Patients, families and patient advocates need to be involved in decisions that affect the patient's healthcare.

What is a health plan?

A health plan may:

- List the steps your doctor will put in place to address your health concern
- Be complex and long-term, based on your health
- Involve managing a chronic disease (e.g. diabetes, heart disease, cancer)

What are the steps in making a health plan?

Steps may include:

- An assessment that includes a health history
- The name of the health problem
- Visits with other providers for medical tests, or specific advice (e.g. medications, surgeries, consults, other treatment choices)
- Next steps - once test results are back and a diagnosis is given
- Discussions about the diagnosis or health problem
- Second opinions, if the doctor or patient/family wishes to have one
- Healthcare recommended and the goals of the treatments
- Benefits and risks of any future treatments
- Future treatments - these may include:
 - Admission to a hospital
 - Preparation for upcoming surgery (See *Prepare for Surgery.*)
 - Undergoing anesthesia (sleep caused by medication so you will not have pain), if surgery occurs
 - Staying in hospital after surgery (See *Prepare for Your Stay in Hospital.*)
 - Leaving hospital and at-home self-care
- Follow up - review of the health plan and notes on progress

What role can you play in your health plan?

- Discuss your health needs and what you expect with your healthcare team.
- Discuss your personal situation and cultural practices if they affect your health plan.
- Ask questions and talk about your concerns.
- Ask your patient advocate to assist, if you need support.
- Ask questions if the facts are not clear.
- Take notes as your doctor talks.
- Write down all information (e.g. providers' names, contact information, and what was discussed).
- Sum up what you think you heard.
- Learn the facts about your health problem and any treatments recommended.
- Ask your doctor for a list of resources and useful websites. See *Talk with Your Doctor.*
- Phone if your symptoms get worse. Make an appointment to get your test results.

Remember

- Get involved in your healthcare decisions.
- Share your healthcare needs, expectations and wishes.
- Ask questions.
- Choose a patient advocate.
- Learn about your health problems.
- Find out what you need to do and why.

Resources

Canadian Resources

- Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety (MIPS) websites www.safetoask.ca and www.mbips.ca.
- *Info Health Guide to Health Services in Manitoba: Answers to Questions About Health Care*. Manitoba; 2009. www.gov.mb.ca/health/guide/index.html
- *Navigating Canada's Health Care: A User Guide to Getting the Care You Need*. Michael Decter and Francesca Grosso. Penguin Canada; 2008.
 - Chapter 12: Navigating Canadian Health Care – Swiftly
 - Chapter 13: Navigating Canadian Health Care – Safely
 - Chapter 14: Be the Squeaky Wheel – How to Complain Successfully
- *Nothing About Me, Without Me! A Practical Guide for Avoiding Medical Errors*. Melinda Ashton and Linda Richards. Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishing; 2003.
- *Finding Your Voice: Our Journey with Cancer through the Health Care System*. Dawn M. White. Winnipeg, MB: Friesens; 2009. www.dawnmwhite.ca
- *Secrets of Becoming a Priority Patient: Keys to Becoming an 'Insider' in the Healthcare System*. Ronald Baigrie and Colleen McKinnon. Sudbury, ON: The Medical School for Patients; 2003.

Books

- *100 Questions and Answers about Communicating with your Healthcare Provider*. John A. King and Cynthia R. King. Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett; 2009.
- *Family Centered Patient Advocacy: A Training Manual*. Ilene Corina and Eve Shapiro (Editors). Wantagh, NY: Pulse of New York; 2007.
<http://pulseofny.org/resources/FCPAP%2010%2029%20advocate.pdf>
- *Protect Yourself in the Hospital: Insider Tips for Avoiding Hospital Mistakes for Yourself or Someone You Love*. Thomas A. Sharon. Chicago: Contemporary Books; 2004.