

# Providing Information and Planning

A leaflet for healthcare staff



*Making conversations easier*

# Providing Information and Planning

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1. Provide the correct amount and type of information
2. Aid patient recall and understanding
3. Incorporate the patient's perspective
4. Shared decision-making



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*Good communication does not mean that you have to speak in perfectly formed sentences and paragraphs. It isn't about slickness. Simple and clear go a long way.*

John Kotter, Konosuke Matsushita Professor of Leadership, Emeritus, at the Harvard Business School



# Providing Information and Planning

## 1. Provide the correct amount and type of information

Find out what the patient already knows or understands and what they want to know.

### Assess the starting point

*Just so I know where to begin, could you tell me what you know already about your heart condition?*

When you have established what the patient already knows and wants to know, merge this agenda with the information you want to provide.



### Communication skills

- Assess starting point
- Chunk and check
- Ask what other information would help the patient
- Avoid giving advice or reassurance prematurely



# Providing Information and Planning

## 1. Provide the correct amount and type of information

### Chunk and check

*First I am going to tell you about the pains (pause), then we can talk about what we can do to help you (pause)...*

Provide small chunks of information, slowly, pausing regularly to check understanding.

### Ask what other information would help the patient

*Many people also want to know...?  
Would that be helpful for you?*



# Providing Information and Planning

## 1. Provide the correct amount and type of information

### Avoid giving advice or reassurance prematurely

It is better if patients understand their own situation and work out what would work best for themselves.

*Before we talk about what we can do to help the chest pains, tell me more about...*



### TIP

You will know that the conversation is working well when it becomes more like a question-and-answer session with the patient asking the questions.



# Providing Information and Planning

## 2. Aid patient recall & understanding

Giving information is often seen as the most important part of the consultation – the patient needs to understand the treatment plan to be able to adhere to it at home.

### Use easy to understand language and avoid jargon

*You need to take this tablet once a day and it has to be at the same time every day*

Avoid giving too much information too early as this may overwhelm the patient.



### Communication skills

- Use easy to understand language and avoid jargon
- Slow down
- Organise the explanation
- Provide structure (signpost)
- Use visual aids
- Repeat and summarise
- Check understanding



# Providing Information and Planning

## 2. Aid patient recall & understanding

### Slow down

*Your son has asthma (pause), he is having problems with his breathing (pause)...*

Pause often to give the patient time to process the information.

### Organise the explanation

*First I want to talk about the diagnosis, then I am going to talk about immediate treatment and then about the future. First, I think you have...*

Divide the explanation into logical sections.



# Providing Information and Planning

## 2. Aid patient recall & understanding

### Provide structure (signpost)

*Ok, now that I know what you are worried about, let's talk about what we can do to help you*

Move from one part of the conversation to the next using signposting.

### Use visual aids

Written information and diagrams are very helpful for patients.

*Here is a diagram of...*





# Providing Information and Planning

## 2. Aid patient recall & understanding

### Repeat and summarise

*So the most important thing to remember is...*



Highlight key points and reinforce key information.

### Check understanding

*I know this is a lot to take in Sean. To make sure that I have explained things clearly to you, can you tell me what you know about the next steps for you?*



Checking understanding can be done by watching the patient's nonverbal responses (when they have had enough) or asking them to restate key messages in their own words.



# Providing Information and Planning

## 2. Aid patient recall & understanding

### TIP

Watch the person's nonverbals – do they look like they are understanding and participating in the conversation, or do they look confused or switched off? If they look confused, pause and say something like...

*'I have shared a lot of information with you. I am going to stop now and hear what questions you have for me?'*



# Providing Information and Planning

## 3. Incorporate the patient's perspective

Ask the patient what is important to them.

**Relate explanation to patient's ideas, concerns and expectations**

*You said you were worried the pain was angina. I can see why you thought that. I think it is more likely to be...*



### Communication skills

- Relate the explanation to the patient's ideas, concerns and expectations
- Watch out for and respond to nonverbal cues
- Allow time and opportunity for patients to contribute



# Providing Information and Planning

## 3. Incorporate the patient's perspective

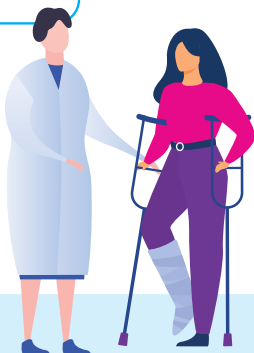
**Watch for and respond to nonverbal cues**

*You look worried (pause), are you concerned about the surgery...?*

**Allow time and opportunity for the patient to contribute**

*What questions do you have for me now?*

Reflect what you observe or hear with a statement. To explore the patient's thoughts further, use *tell me more...*



### TIP

Acknowledge and validate how people feel, this builds connection and helps to make emotions less overwhelming so that people can participate in the conversation.



# Providing Information and Planning

## 4. Shared decision-making

Engaging the patient in the decision-making process leads to the patient feeling more ownership for the decision and taking more responsibility for their own healthcare.

### Share your thinking

*At this stage it is not completely clear what the diagnosis is... what I am thinking is...*

Explain your thinking to the patient and encourage them to contribute their own views.



### Communication skills

- Share your thinking
- Explore options
- Negotiate the plan
- Check with the patient



# Providing Information and Planning

## 4. Shared decision-making

### Explore options

*What do you think?  
Tell me about...?  
What is important to you...?*

Instead of listing treatment options, use open questions to understand the patient's goals, views and wishes.

### Negotiate the plan

*I can see that you have some doubts about surgery so let's think again and see if we can come up with a plan that suits us both*

Signpost your own preference and determine the patient's preference.



# Providing Information and Planning

## 4. Shared decision-making

### Check with the patient

Can I check that you are happy with the plan?...  
What questions do you have for me now?



### TIP

When patients or families ask for specific treatments, find out more by saying *'tell me more about that'*? **Decision aids** can provide patients with a clearer understanding of risks and benefits and make them more at ease with the decisions they make.

[www.hse.ie/nhcprogramme](http://www.hse.ie/nhcprogramme)



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This Skills Card is the work of Paul Kinnersley (EACH & Cardiff University), Peter Gillen & Eva Doherty (RCSI) & Winifred Ryan (HSE) with the help and support of Jonathan Silverman, Marcy Rosenbaum and many others in EACH.

