



OBTAINING GOOD HEALTHCARE & INFORMATION

Communicating with Your Loved One's Healthcare Team

You can make a difference in your loved one's health. It just takes a little effort and time.

How Can You Prepare Before Each Medical Visit?

To prepare before each medical visit:

- Make a list of questions. Put the most important questions first.
- Describe the problem or symptom on paper. Note when each symptom occurs, how long it lasts, and what makes it better or worse.
- Write down changes in your loved one's diet, mood and behavior.
- Bring stroke information you learned from friends, the media or on My HealthVet and the Internet.
- Bring a list of all your loved one's medicines. Include vitamins and over-the-counter medicines. Bring results of tests and reports of visits to non-VA medical offices.

How Do You Involve Yourself During Each Medical Visit?

Communicating with your healthcare team isn't always easy. Show interest in your loved one's health. You'll be surprised with the results.

- If possible, let your loved one take the lead.
- Update the provider on your loved one's health changes. Tell the provider if treatments or medicines are not working.
- Take notes.
- Bring up any point the healthcare provider did not cover.

Use Your Time with Your Healthcare Team Wisely

Providers only have a short time to talk. Remember to do the following:

- Talk about the most important concerns first.
- Be brief and stick to the point.

For more information on stroke caregiving, visit the RESCUE home page:
<http://www.rorc.research.va.gov/rescue>

What Questions Should You Ask?

Ask the provider to explain anything you don't understand.

- Ask the provider about the survivor's diagnoses and what to expect.
- Find out different choices for treatments.
- Find out why tests are being done.
- Ask why your loved one is taking each medicine.
- Talk about local stroke support groups and other resources in your area.

Make Sure You Understand the Provider

- Repeat instructions or treatment information. Ask if you understood correctly.
- Call the provider's office later if you are unclear.
- Ask pharmacists questions about medicines.

Contact your healthcare team with new problems and adverse effects from medicines. Your healthcare team wants to know right away about new symptoms.

How Can My HealthVet Help You?

Ask a VA staff person to show you how to use My HealthVet. With just a few clicks on My HealthVet (<http://www.myhealth.va.gov>) you can keep track of personal health information. For example, you can record blood pressure readings and daily weights. You can find handy tools to record medicines and lab test results. Print and bring this information to visits with the healthcare team.

Remember

- Make a list of questions to ask the healthcare team.
- Use your time wisely on each medical visit. Stick to the point.
- Be sure you understand what the provider tells you.

More Resources

The following resources contain internet links. The location of internet pages can change. Therefore the links provided may not always work. For the most current version of this list, go to <http://www.rorc.research.va.gov/rescue/resources>. This page will be updated frequently.

Link Disclaimer: Links to information and Web sites outside of the Department of Veterans Affairs do not indicate an endorsement of products or services offered by the sites. In addition, these sites may have privacy and security policies that are inconsistent with those of VA.

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My HealthVet (MHV)

Web: <http://www.myhealth.va.gov>

My HealthVet (MHV) provides trusted information on stroke and other health conditions. It also provides resources for stroke caregivers and tools to track your loved one's health.

Also visit the Caregiver Assistance Center on the My HealthVet Web site. This section provides more information on caregiving.

- Go to: <http://www.myhealth.va.gov>
- Click on the button that says "Enter Here"
- Click on "Research Health" on the top bar, then "Healthy Living Centers"
- Click on "Caregiver Assistance"

National Institute on Aging (NIA)

Web: <http://www.nia.nih.gov>

Phone: 1-800-222-4225

The National Institute on Aging has guides on obtaining good healthcare and information. Information also available in Spanish.

"Talking with Your Doctor: A Guide for Older People"

<http://www.nia.nih.gov/healthinformation/publications/talkingwithyourdoctor>

References: AARP. (2003). *How to talk to your doctor*. Retrieved June, 18, 2008, from: http://www.aarp.org/health/conditions/articles/ask_questions.html; National Institute on Aging. (2008). *Talking with your doctor: A guide for older people*. Retrieved June, 18, 2008, from: <http://www.nia.nih.gov>.



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