



# Patient Teaching Tips

Amongst the many things we do everyday, teaching is one of the most important activities we do. “Patients control what they do with the health teaching you provide. Your responsibility is to assist patients in achieving and maintain health by sharing knowledge, helping with the practical problems of carrying out instructions, and supporting patients as they integrate new knowledge and skills.”<sup>1</sup> Below are tips for general patient teaching.

## **Preparing to Teach:**

Be organized and prepared with teaching tools.

- Collect appropriate handouts, videos and fact sheets.
- Teaching aids should have simple language and illustrations. Most experts recommend using teaching aids written at a 5<sup>th</sup> grade reading level.
- Identify learning issues prior to teaching – hearing, vision, age-related problems, literacy level, etc.
  - Adjust your teaching to accommodate your patients issues.
  - Find out about your patient’s culture, values, and health care practices. This will also assist in how you will plan on teaching your patient.
  - Identify “teachable moments”.
    - These are moments when your patient is most ready to learn. Avoid times when the patient is tired, in pain, or distracted, etc.
    - This allows the patient to learn and understand small doses of information at a time and at his own pace.

## **Teaching Adult Patients:**

- Speak clearly and concisely. Use simple words.
- Include the patient as a partner in the teaching process.
- Use teaching strategies that are interactive and allows for patient participation - this can help promote compliance.
  - Ask open-ended questions. For example, “Tell me how you’ve been feeling.” rather than “How are you today?”
  - Research is showing that the healthcare professional’s ability to communicate and explain information while expressing empathy and concern for the patient is associated with increased patient compliance.
- Ask the patient if someone else will be involved in his/her care. This way you can include that individual when teaching the patient.
- Build on what the patient already knows.
  - Verify what your patient knows about what you want to teach him/her.
  - Determine what the patient needs and wants to know.
  - Invite the patient to ask questions.
    - If you do not know the answer, inform the patient that you will find out.
- Emphasize why the information is important or useful.

### **Mission Statement**

*To provide leadership and assistance to renal dialysis and transplant facilities in a manner that supports continuous improvement in patient care, outcomes, safety and satisfaction.*

- Reinforce oral teaching and demonstrations with handouts.
  - Do not solely rely on distributing handouts or other resources alone. Discuss the handouts/materials with the patient.
  - Use repetition to reinforce what you are teaching and what the patient has learned.
- Assess understanding.
  - Assess your teaching session as you go.
  - Is your patient paying attention?
  - What is the patient's body language telling you?
  - Is the session interactive or one-way?
  - Is the patient understanding what you are teaching him?
- Assess the session afterward also.
  - Did you teach what you wanted to?
  - Did you get sidetracked?
  - Was your teaching style successful?
- Document your patient teaching.
  - By documenting this it communicates with other healthcare providers what the patient has learned, what needs to be reviewed, and/or what has not yet been addressed with the patient.
  - Teaching is more efficient when you build on each others progress.

***“The point of patient education is not to increase information, but to improve health outcomes.”***<sup>2</sup> A well informed patient can make better decisions that would yield better outcomes and thus a better quality of life.

Resources:

1. Habel, Maureen, RN, MA; *Getting Your Message Across: Patient Teaching, Part 2*; <http://www.patienteducationupdate.com/2005-10-01/article3.asp>
2. London, Fran, M.S., RN; *Moving Beyond Teaching Checklists*; <http://www.patienteducationupdate.com/2005-10-01/article4.asp>
3. Dadich, Karen A.; *Practical Tips for Patient Teaching*; [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qa3689/is\\_199708/ai\\_n8765117/?tag=rbxcra.2.a.11](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3689/is_199708/ai_n8765117/?tag=rbxcra.2.a.11)
4. Hohler, Sharon E.; *Tips for Better Patient Teaching*; [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qa3689/is\\_2000407/ai\\_n9442024/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3689/is_2000407/ai_n9442024/)