Allina Health

Talking with Your Health Care Provider When You Have a Serious Illness

Why You Need to Talk with Your Health Care Provider

If you have an illness for which there is no cure, you need to talk with your health care provider about your hopes and goals in dealing with your illness.

You can talk with your health care provider at any visit you have with him or her. Share your questions, concerns and feelings as you talk about your options. If you don't understand something, you can simply say, "This is new to me. Will you please explain that to me one more time?"

Together, you and your health care provider will make decisions about your treatment and end-of-life care.

Questions to Ask Your Health Care Provider

- Do I have a serious or life-limiting illness?
- Can my illness be cured?
- If my illness can't be cured, are there treatments that can slow down my illness?
- What kind of care is available to focus on making me comfortable?
- If my illness keeps getting worse, when is it a good time to think about getting supportive and comfort-focused care?
- Will you be the one to tell me when to contact hospice?
- Will you stay involved with my care even when I am no longer looking for treatment for my disease?
- How do I plan for my end-of-life care (advance care planning)?

Other Questions to Ask Your Health Care Provider

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Information adapted from Stratis Health, the Minnesota Medicare Quality Improvement Organization.

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