


Talking About Your Illness With Loved Ones and Caregivers



Allina Health



This booklet can help you talk with your loved ones about your illness and the future. It is based on what you have already talked about with your clinician.

Talking about your illness with family and friends may not be easy, but it will help them understand what is important to you. It will also help them support you and your decisions.

Before you talk to your loved ones, think about when and where you want to talk.

- Choose a time and place when you feel relaxed.
- Be sure you have time to talk for a while.
- You can use the words in this guide, or use your own words — whatever is easier for you.

Start the Conversation

I am doing OK right now, and even though there is no rush, my doctors think we need to begin talking about my future care.

They believe in being prepared and want to know my goals and wishes for medical care.

Since you are important to me, I'd also like you to be part of the conversation.

If at some point I can't speak for myself, I want you to be able to make decisions for me.

Check in With Your Loved One

Understanding

What is your understanding now of where I am with my illness?

Information

I know that it may not be easy, but I would like to share information about my illness with you. Is that OK?

How much information about what is likely to be ahead would you like from me?

My doctor and I talked about the outlook for my illness. Can I share that with you?

Share What is Important To You

Goals and wishes

I'd like to share some of my goals that might affect my health care decisions. Some things I'm looking forward to are...

Examples: Meet my new grandchild, celebrate my next birthday.

Fears and worries

My biggest fears and worries about my future with this illness are...

Examples: Not being able to make decisions for myself, or having to ask others for help with basic needs.

Abilities

I can't imagine not being able to do certain things...

Examples: Not being able to recognize or interact with people, not being able to care for myself.

Tough choices

I know that we may have to choose between treatments that are hard to go through and more time.

Examples: Being in the hospital, having a feeding tube, living in a nursing home, being on a breathing machine, more chemotherapy.

Plan to Talk Again

Talk with your loved ones and caregivers as your situation or wishes change. Ask:

- Do you have any questions about what we discussed?
- I would like to talk with you about my illness and medical care as my treatment continues. Is that OK?
- I know this was probably not an easy conversation. How do you feel now that we have talked?
- Are there other people we should talk with?

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