Updated May 28, 2017

We are here today to talk about how you can take a more active role in your health care.

This program was developed by The Hospital & Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania and its Pennsylvania Hospital Engagement Network. It was then modified by the National Network of Libraries of Medicine, Middle Atlantic Region.

NOTE: Introduce the speakers and your health professional who is going to assist with the role play. **Have attendees fill out the first side ONLY of the evaluation.**

Engagement

What is engagement?

- Listen
- Understand
- Ask questions

Why is engagement important?

- Better health and satisfaction

Your health and the care you receive is very personal and unique to you.

Your healthcare provider creates a treatment plan based on your unique needs and symptoms.

Once you leave the provider's office or the hospital, it's up to you to follow that plan, whether it's taking medication(s), returning for a follow up appointment, or eating differently.

It's critical that you take an active, engaged role in your care.

So what does it mean to be "engaged" in your health?

Being engaged in your health simply means being an *active* participant by *listening* to your provider, making sure you *understand* what they are saying, and *asking questions* as needed. After all, no one knows YOU better than YOU.

When patients are involved in their health care, the quality of that care improves, with better results, and increased satisfaction. When patients and their families are engaged as partners with their health care team, patients report better physical and emotional health.

(PRESENTER TIP: Personal stories often help to explain why taking an active role in your health is very important. For example, you could talk about buying a washing machine or something similar. You could discuss some of the questions you would ask the salesperson and some of the things you would want to know before purchasing the item. You could then connect the concept of asking questions about this purchase to the need to understand and ask questions about something as important and personal as your health.)

Tips to Stay Engaged

Engage for Health

- Take a friend or family member with you
- Write things down
- Repeat back what you've heard
- Ask questions

Seeing a doctor, a nurse, or being in the hospital can be very stressful. You may be thinking or worrying about what the provider is saying to you, the impact the care will have on your family or friends, how much the care will cost, how you're going to get to your next medical appointment, feel pain or discomfort, or any number of other things.

So, listening, understanding, and asking questions can be really difficult, but it's still really important.

Here are some tips that may help:

1. Take a friend or family member with you to your health care visit. They can help to listen, ask questions, and support you.

2. Write things down.

Consider writing down your questions or concerns *before* your health care visit. Take your notes with you to your visit to help you remember your questions.

While you're there, write down important things your provider tells you as well as any other questions you want to ask.

You may even want to start a health "journal," regularly writing down how you're feeling and any concerns you have.

You can bring your health journal with you to your visit and discuss it with your care provider.

3. Repeat back what you've heard.

Just like when you are buying a new washing machine, you need to understand how it works so that you can use it properly. Where do you turn it on? Where does the soap go? How will I know when the cycle is complete?

As your care provider talks to you, consider repeating back to him or her what you think they said. For example, you could say something like, "So, what I heard you say is that I need to reduce my salt intake..." Do this throughout the visit to ensure you have heard and understood important information.

4. Ask questions. Ask as many as you need to understand your care.

So to summarize, becoming and engaged and active participant in your health is important for you to receive the best possible health outcomes. Consider bringing along a friend or family member with you to your health care visit, write things down (before your visit and during your visit), repeat back what you're hearing your care provider say, and ask as many questions as you need.

Communication

"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has occurred."

—George Bernard Shaw

This quote shows that just because you said something, does not mean that the other person actually understood what you were trying to communicate.

A key to taking an active role in your health care is focusing on 2-way communication to assure that both you as the patient and your health care provider understand what each other is saying.

Questions are the Answers

URL for AHRQ Waiting Room Video

We are going to take a moment to watch a short video that was designed and distributed by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.

This video features patients and providers discussing the importance of asking questions at medical visits.

Your "Additional Resources" flyer includes a link to this video, along with other helpful resources on taking an active role in your health care.

Let's watch the movie and we'll discuss it when it's done.

PRESENTER TIP: Ask attendees to tell you what they felt was the most important piece of advice that they gathered from the video. What information was helpful? Or not helpful? Was there anything surprising they learned while watching the video?

3 Types of Questions

Engage for Health

- ***What*** is this test for?
- ***What*** are my choices?

- ***Why*** do I need this treatment?
- ***Why*** do I need to decrease how much salt I eat?

- ***How*** often do I need to take the medication?
- ***How*** do you spell the name of that drug?

Earlier, I mentioned that asking questions is an important way to be engaged in your health. The video we just watched encouraged you to do this as well.

Let's take a look at three main types of questions you may want to ask: What, Why, and How.

Examples of "What" questions could be, "What is this test for?" or "What are my choices for treatment." What are some other "What" questions you could ask your provider?

Another example of the type of question you could ask would be a "Why" question, such as: "Why do I need this treatment?" or "Why do I need to decrease how much salt I eat?" Can you share an example of another "Why" question you may ask your provider?

The third type of question you may want to ask are "How" questions. Examples of "How" questions could be, "How often do I need to take this medication?" or "How do you spell the name of that drug?" What are other "How " questions you could ask your provider?

What Did You Hear?

PRESENTER NOTE: This is a two-click slide. The first slide is blank with just the heading, "What did you hear?"

It's important to remember that words mean different things to different people. Think about conversations you have had with friends and family where you had two different conversations.

PRESENTER NOTES: Talk about common words such as normal and excessive and explain how these will mean different things to different people.

Make sure that you ask your provider if you are unclear about what is meant by things such as ONE, NORMAL, HEAVY or EXCESSIVE. Think about instructions such as don't lift anything heavy – if you are a body builder your heavy may not be the same heavy as an average person.

PRESENTER NOTES: Ask audience members to think about other things that a provider could say that can be interpreted differently to different people (for example a housewife and a body builder). Some examples could include words such as "heavy," "excessive," and "normal."

The woman in the photo you are about to see was told that she could have ONE glass of wine a day.

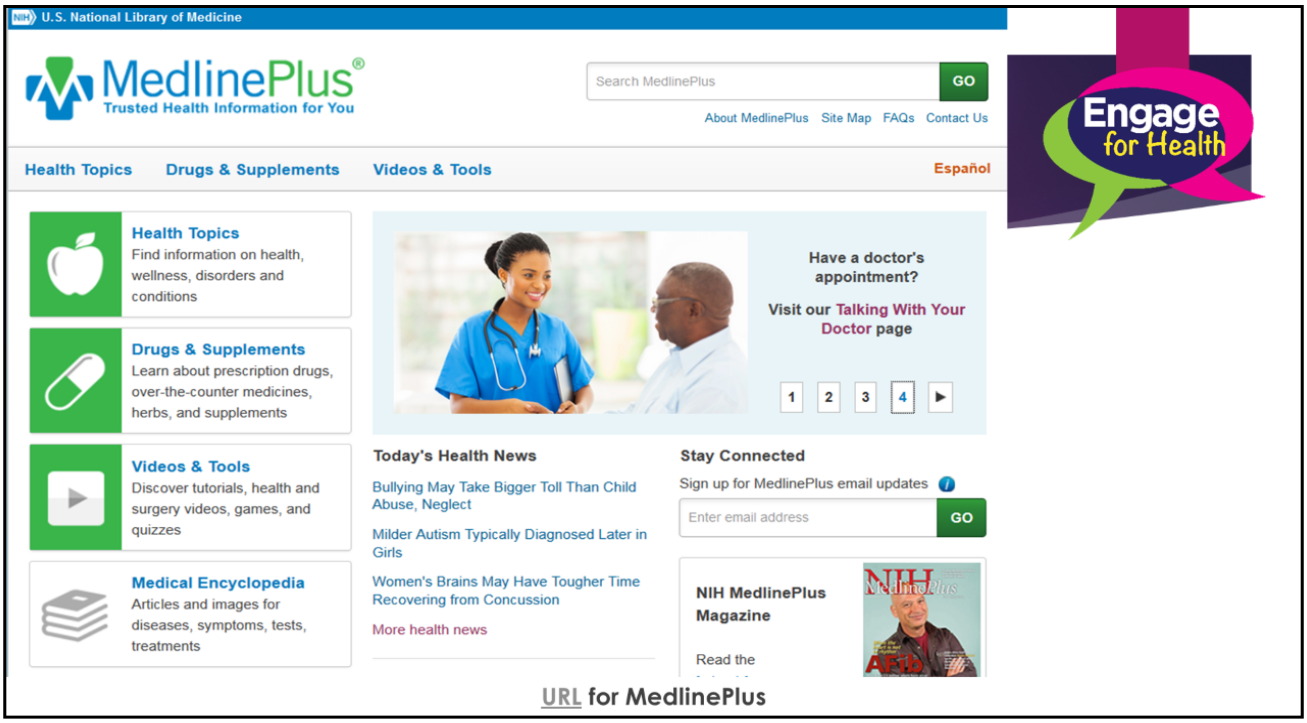
PRESENTER NOTES: Click to add the picture and show what this woman heard.

So, what do you think the provider meant when they told her she could have 1 glass of wine a day?

PRESENTER NOTES: Engage in a conversation about what the provider more likely meant by "one glass of wine a day."

What questions do you have? Now, let's take some time to engage for health and do some role play. Do I have a volunteer to be a patient?

PRESENTER NOTES: You can continue your discussion or, if you are doing a role play, proceed to the role play portion. Click to have the Role play bubble appear.

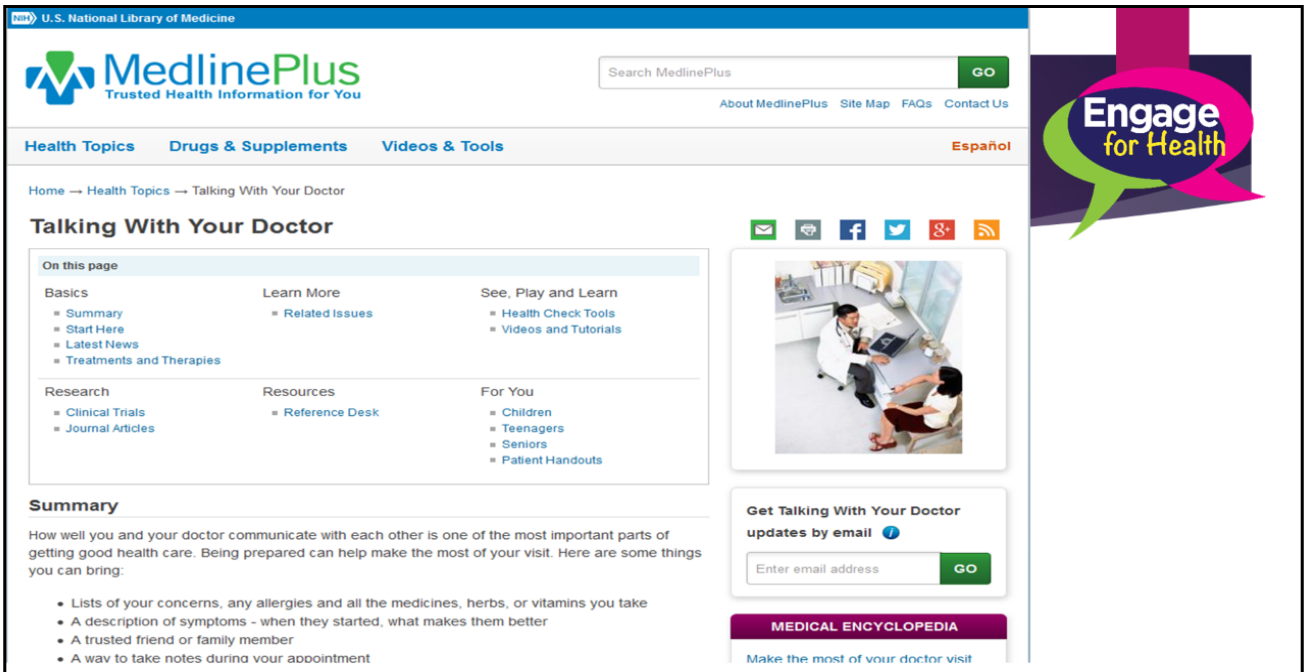


URL for MedlinePlus

Now I would like to share with you some resources that you can use to find health information and learn more about improving communication with your health care provider.

MedlinePlus is the National Institutes of Health's Web site for patients and their families and friends. Produced by the National Library of Medicine, the world's largest medical library, it brings you information about diseases, conditions, and wellness issues in language you can understand. MedlinePlus offers reliable, up-to-date health information, anytime, anywhere, for free.

You can use MedlinePlus to learn about the latest treatments, look up information on a drug or supplement, find out the meanings of words, or view medical videos or illustrations. You can also get links to the latest medical research on your topic or find out about clinical trials on a disease or condition.



URL for Talking With Your Doctor (MedlinePlus)

The Talking with Your Doctor Page within MedlinePlus includes information on:
What you should bring to your doctors appointment
Links to the AHRQ questions to ask your doctor that we talked about
It also includes Question Builder: Be Prepared for Your Next Medical Appointment (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality)

You can also find health topic pages on topics such as choosing a doctor or health care provider, patient rights, patient safety and other topics of interest. MedlinePlus has almost 1,000 health topics so that you can find reliable health information to make educated decisions about your health or the health of a loved one.

PRESENTER NOTES: You can ask the group if anyone remembers the 3 types of questions

URL for Talking to Your Doctor (TeensHealth)

PRESENTER NOTES: Feel free to skip the teenager slides if you do not have this audience or members of your audience who you feel would need this information.

The Talking with Your Doctor Page within MedlinePlus includes links to information for teenagers on how to talk to with their doctor. If you are a teenager or you have teenagers at home, it's a wonderful opportunity to begin a discussion with them about how to engage in their health. As the begin to get older they will need to self advocate and this is an excellent resource from TeensHeatlh from Nemours that can help you guide that discussion and teach a very valuable lesson to youth.

Now that we have discussed two resources that are available for you to use to locate health information, do you have any questions about MedlinePlus or NIHSeniorHealth. At this time I'd like to provide you with an opportunity to search MedlinePlus or NIHSeniorHealth. Please do let me know if you need help as you navigate these resources.

PRESENTER NOTES: Spend 10-15 minutes having them search a topic of their choice or have computers set to talking with your doctor page for either MedlinePlus or NIHSeniorHealth depending upon your audience. **Now have attendees complete the second side of the evaluation form and collect them.**

Communication is Key!

URL for House MD Video

Image from Fox

PRESENTER NOTES: Just for fun!! If you've got extra time or you want to emphasize the issue of instructions with providers and patients you can show this video. Talk about what House (the provider) did correctly.

Correctly: He asked the patient to show him exactly how she took her medication when he became concerned that she was using her inhaler too frequently. Sometimes as a patient you can ask the doctor if you can show them how you are doing a certain activity to ensure that it's being done correctly.

For More Information Contact:

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Thank You and do let me know if you have any questions. **Be sure to collect the session evaluations.**

PRESENTERS: Remember to scan both sides of each evaluation and email them to NNLM MAR at nnlmmar@pitt.edu and put Engage for Health evaluations in the subject line. Thank you for choosing to offer this program at your library/organization. If you are interested in more ideas on health outreach and programming for your community contact your Regional Medical Library for ideas, resources and possible funding.