

How to Communicate Effectively about Genetic & Genomic Information

A Guide for Patients and Families

Talking about genetic and genomic information can be difficult and overwhelming. But the following **3 communication strategies** can help you:

- Make the most of limited appointment time.
- Help you share your goals, preferences, and concerns.
- Leave your appointment feeling more confident and informed.

1. Agenda Setting

Agenda setting involves sharing with your doctor what you want to talk during your appointment.

How to do it:

- Name 1–3 topics you want to cover
- Check that you and your clinician agree before moving forward

What to say:

- “I’d like to talk about my genetic test results and what they mean for my family.”
- “Before we start, can we make sure we cover these two questions?”

2. Ask Questions & Clarify Information

Asking questions prevents confusion later, and clarifying information ensures understanding.

How to do it:

- Write down questions before your appointment.
- Speak up if something is unclear or overwhelming.
- Ask for information to be repeated or explained differently.

What to say:

- “Can you explain that in a different way please?”
- “So, I understand the next steps for me to be...Is that correct?”

3. Limit Information Seeking

Online health information can be helpful—but also overwhelming. More information isn’t always better.

How to do it:

- Set a time limit for online searching (e.g., 20 to 30 minutes).
- Focus on trusted sources instead of many.
- Bring the information you find to your doctor and discuss it.

What to look for:

- Who created this information?
- Is it up to date?
- Does it apply to my situation?

A Final Reminder

Effective communication is a skill — It gets easier with practice.

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