

1. **Ask questions.** Health professionals talk about cancer all day long so sometimes they forget that you are new to this information. Don't be afraid to ask your doctor or nurse to explain something you don't understand. You might say, "That doesn't quite make sense to me. Can you explain it more simply?"
2. **Bring a friend or family member to take notes during appointments.** They can record your questions and answers and so you can digest the information later.
3. **Don't take it personally.** Sometimes medical professionals can seem unemotional or not friendly. This does not mean they don't care. Providers try and keep their emotions out of their work so they can focus on your treatment and provide you the best care possible.
4. **Speak up.** If something about your care provider bothers you, bring it up in a constructive way. Like any relationship, there will be rough spots. It is important to voice your concerns and opinions.
5. **Tell them what you know.** Your provider will judge how much information to share with you based on what they sense you already know and what you want to know. Communicate what you know about your cancer and what you want to know. Recite what they explain to you in your terms if you aren't sure you understand something correctly. You might start off a sentence with, "So you mean I should..."
6. **Ask your nurse.** Oncology nurses are very knowledgeable and may have more time to talk with you than your doctors. They may also be able to explain things better.
7. **Look at pictures.** Ask to see x-rays or scans, or ask the doctor to draw a diagram or show you a video. Every person has a different learning style and seeing the information might make it easier to understand.
8. **Tell them what works.** If your provider explains something in a certain way that works for you, share it with them. You might say, "Seeing pictures really helped me understand what you were trying to explain."
9. **Say thanks.** If your provider goes above and beyond or makes you feel at ease, express appreciation for their efforts.
10. **Be your own advocate!** If your provider is not meeting your needs, you are entitled to tell them and/or switch providers. You are in control of your treatment and you should do whatever you find necessary to get the best care possible.