

## Provide a Health Context for Numbers and Mathematical Concepts

- Health measurements, such as cholesterol or glucose levels, have little meaning to patients unless you put them into a context the patient can understand.
  - > Instead of just telling patients their numbers, give them additional information such as high and low parameters or a goal number. For example, “Your cholesterol level is 305. A healthy cholesterol level would be less than 200, so we need to talk about how we can lower your number...”

## Take a Pause

- Medical instructions can be confusing, so slow down and take pauses to give your patient time to digest the information and ask for clarification.

## Be an Active Listener

- Active listening means encouraging patients to talk and can be used to gather information.
  - > Allow your patients to tell their story or information they feel is necessary for their visit.

## Address Quizzical Looks

- You may notice that your patient sometimes may look confused, stare blankly, or may not seem to be paying attention when you are discussing medical instructions. These may be signs that the patient does not understand what you are explaining.
  - > Rephrase your instructions by using simpler words and concepts, and draw pictures if appropriate. Remember to use the “Teach Back” method to ensure that your patients understand and can communicate what they are going to do when they leave your office.

## Create a Welcoming and Supportive Environment

- Patients are most comfortable in an office that feels private and encourages communication.
  - > From the registration desk to the exam room, patients should be encouraged to ask questions. Discussions with the patient, whether it be with you or the nurse, should not be held in front of other staff or patients, but rather covered during his or her private consultation time.



Clear Health Communication Initiative  
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# Help Your Patients Succeed

## Tips for Improving Communication with Patients

