

HealthyBy Choice

...One Day at a Time

Volume 14 Issue 2 • February 2019



How to be a Wise Healthcare Consumer

Every healthcare provider visit or medicine treatment presents you with choices and responsibilities. Sometimes the right choice isn't clear. Here are common problems you may run into as a healthcare consumer, with tips for wise responses:

The treatment your healthcare provider prescribed isn't working. Wrong treatment? The right treatment in the wrong way? Either way, your healthcare provider needs to know. Ask them to explain the treatment directions, or to suggest any available treatment alternatives.

The side effects seem worse than the cure. Worried about the side effects of your prescriptions...are you cutting back because of side effects? Again, let your healthcare provider know. Perhaps there's a different pill you can take that's just as effective without side effects. Or maybe the dosage can be changed.

The hospital bill looks wrong. Do dates of service look wrong? Charged twice for the same procedure, or a service or supply item that you never received? Check your hospital bill. This gives you the opportunity to fix any errors and perhaps trim your out-of-pocket costs. If you feel your insurance plan has made a mistake by denying coverage, call the company. If hospital charges seems out of line, ask your health plan to look into it.

You're not satisfied with your healthcare provider. Don't hesitate to change providers if you don't feel your current provider knows enough about your condition. You deserve a provider you can understand, who listens and encourages questions, and supports you in managing your condition.

A recommended treatment makes you uneasy. Don't rush into important health decisions. Ask why you may need a surgery...if there are treatment alternatives...what the risks and benefits might be. Get a second opinion, if necessary.

You feel out of control in your care. Feeling out of control often has to do with a lack of knowledge. To learn more about your condition and how to self-manage it, contact a respected nonprofit group, such as the American Cancer Society or the American Heart Association, to ask for information. Go to respected online sites. Ask your healthcare provider for brochures.

You know you should quit smoking, eat better, exercise, but it's just not happening. Do you need more support in making lifestyle changes? Talk with your healthcare provider or seek help from your employer's wellness program.

9 Tips for Being a Wise Healthcare Consumer

1. **Take the time to carefully select a doctor or health care provider.** Ask friends or relatives for recommendations.
2. **Prepare for visits to your health care provider by compiling lists of questions or concerns you wish to discuss during your appointment.** Make the most of the time you have.
3. **Ask questions about medications you are prescribed.** Understand why you are taking it and how it should be taken.
4. **Keep a checklist of all medications you are taking and share this list with your health care provider.**
5. **Be aware of routine medical tests and examinations, and the recommended times to have them. Use home medical tests when available.** They are less costly and can be used without a visit to the doctor.
6. **Keep commonly used medicinal items at home.** This can save costly trips to the doctor or emergency room.
7. **Understand your health insurance plan.**
8. **Take care of your mental health as well as you would your physical health.**
9. **Keep a list of health agencies handy as a reference.** Most are available by phone, fax or email and can serve as a resource for free information and support.



Plug in and be your own advocate!



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American Heart Month

How do you want to live? Along with eating right and being active, real health includes getting enough sleep, practicing mindfulness, managing stress, keeping mind and body fit, connecting socially, and more.

Willpower Up!

It turns out that willpower may be a finite resource, so it's no wonder you're more likely to bend to temptation later in the day.

Try a few of these tips to build up your willpower so you can keep positive habits going strong.

Arrange your environment.

- Clean: Get rid of your temptations, so you don't have to resist them.
- Commit: Make plans with a friend who can hold you accountable.
- Optimize: Time tasks so they align with your willpower – like grocery shopping when you're already full.

Boost your willpower in the moment.

- Postpone: Say "not now, maybe later" to get the devil off your shoulder when you're tempted.
- Distract: Give your impulse a chill pill by focusing on something else for a few minutes.
- Hide: Remove the temptation from plain sight or remove yourself from the situation.

Strengthen your ongoing willpower.

- Meditate: a 10-minute mindful meditation session every morning can help improve impulse control over time.
- Sleep: Think of rest as a shield from temptations – the more you sleep, the stronger it gets.
- Stop Swearing: Changing a speech pattern, like avoiding expletives, can help you learn to extend your willpower.

Excuse your setbacks.

- Forgive Yourself: You're human, after all! Give yourself a break when you deviate from the path, and you'll be more likely to get back on it.

Get more wellness tips at heart.org/healthyforgood
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Choose You...Choose Health!

