

it's good to ask

The *It's Good to Ask* program recommends starting with 3 easy questions:

Be Active in Your Care

Think of yourself as a partner in your health care team. Being an active participant in your health care means you:

1. **Tell your health care team members** about any concerns you have about your or your family member's health and/or medication.
2. **Ask your health care team** any questions that you have so you can make informed choices about the care you or your family member receive.

Studies show that patients who are actively involved in making decisions about their own care are more likely to have good outcomes.

1 What is my health problem?

2 What do we need to do?

3 Why do we need to do this?

A worksheet can help you remember these questions and keep track of what you need to do to improve your health is available at www.bcpsqc.ca/public/ask.htm.

Tell your health care team about your or your family member's health concerns, conditions and medications.

You and your family are the ones who know the most about your health. Tell members of your health care team everything you can, even if you think they already know, and even if you think it is not important.

- Write down details about any **concerns** you have about your or your family member's health, such as how long, when, and where your symptoms occur. Tell members of your health care team as much as you can about your concern. The *It's Good to Ask* 3 Questions Worksheet at www.bcpsqc.ca/public/ask.htm can be used to do this.
- Look for information about **your or your family member's condition**. Good places to get that information are from your doctor, the BC Health Guide, respected websites (such as www.healthlinkbc.ca), and support groups.
- Make sure your doctor and pharmacist know about the **medicines you or your family member take and why you take them**. This includes any vitamins, herbs and herbal remedies, food supplements, prescription and non-prescription medications you take. You can download and complete a Medication Card from www.bcpsqc.ca/public/ask.htm to take with you.
- Keep a journal of **your or your family member's medical history** including past and present health conditions, surgeries or medical procedures and vaccinations.
- Whenever you get a new medication, tell your doctors and nurses about **allergies or negative reactions you or your family member have had to other medicines**.
- Pay attention to the care you or your family member get. If **something does not seem or feel right**, tell a member of your health care team as soon as you can.

The Be Active in Your Care Tipsheet is part of the *It's Good to Ask* program. The *It's Good to Ask* program includes tools and tips to help patients and their families understand their health condition and partner with members of their health care team. *It's Good to Ask* materials are available at www.bcpsqc.ca/public/ask.htm.



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Ask your health care team questions so you can make choices about the care you or your family member receive.

Asking more questions will help you make better informed choices. This tipsheet provides you with additional tips to help you learn as much as you can about your or your family member's condition, tests you may undergo and treatments you may receive.

A. Ask health care team members about your or your family member's condition.

Begin by telling your health care team member as much as you can about your or your family member's health concern. Next, ask questions to better understand your condition.

You may wish to ask:

- Can you please tell us more about my or my family member's condition?
- How sure are you that I or my family member have this condition?
- How serious is my or my family member's condition?
- Do you have any information that we can take away with us?
- Can you tell us where we can find out more?
- Who will be following up on my or my family member's care and when do we need to see them?

B. Ask your doctor about medical tests.

Medical tests and laboratory tests help doctors and other members of your health care team to make decisions about the care and treatment you or your family member will receive. It is important that you understand the reason for any tests you or your family member have and are prepared for the test.

You may wish to ask:

- Why is this test being done? What should it tell you about my or my family member's health?
- Is there anything else that we need to do to prepare for the test?
- Are there any side effects of the test? Will it be painful or uncomfortable? Is it unusual to have pain or discomfort?
- When will the results be ready?
- How will we be informed of the results?
- Who do we contact if we don't get the results?

C. Ask your doctor or nurse about your or your family member's treatment options.

Taking part in decisions about the treatment you or your family member receive is an important way to ensure the best possible care for yourself and your family.

You may wish to ask:

- What do you recommend?
- How effective is this treatment?
- What does the treatment involve?
- How will this treatment help me or my family member?
- Are there any side effects or risks?
- How long will I or my family member need treatment for?
- How will we know if the treatment is working?
- What should we look out for?
- What will happen if we don't have any treatment?
- Is there anything we should stop or avoid doing?
- Is there anything else I or my family member can do to help myself?
- Are there other ways to treat my or my family member's condition?

D. Ask your doctor and pharmacist about medications that are given to you or your family member, especially new medications.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about any allergies you or your family member have, medications you take and or negative reactions to medications in the past. Before you start a new medication, ask questions to ensure you are comfortable with why and how to take the medication.

You may wish to ask:

- What is it?
- What is it for?
- Are there any side effects? What do we do if they occur?
- How am I or my family member supposed to take it, and for how long?
- Do you have any information that we can take away with us?
- What food, drink, or activities should we avoid while taking it?
- If you or your family member are taking more than one medication, vitamin, herb or over-the-counter drug: Is it safe to take these medications together?

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