

# 8 Things You Need to Know Now

## A Quick Guide for Patients and Families



ZagGO®

**B**eing a patient or family caregiver is hard, stressful work for which no one is prepared. For the best healthcare possible, it's important to be an engaged, effective, empowered member of your medical team. These 8 tips for managing an illness or injury are a great way to start the path towards being an empowered patient or family caregiver.



## Be Involved in Your Care

Don't be afraid to be the "squeaky wheel". Be politely assertive. Advocate. Ask questions. Speak up if something doesn't seem right.

### Why?

[Studies](#) show that effective patient-doctor communication leads to better adherence of treatment plans, better medical decisions, and better outcomes. Additionally, [research](#) shows that "engaged" patients have better care coordination and a reduced risk of being a victim of a medical error.

## Prepare for Appointments

Go to all medical appointments prepared with your written questions and concerns. Also, write down your "story", including the severity and duration of your symptoms, and any lifestyle changes before new symptoms appeared.

### Why?

Most doctors have limited time for appointments, so you want to make sure you take full advantage of the time you have with your doctor. And you don't want to forget to discuss something important.

## Tell Your Story – As Often as Needed

Communicate your story clearly, as often as needed. Don't let a doctor's interruption sidetrack you. And don't shorten the story or leave out important details, even when you're frustrated that you have already told your story to several doctors.

### Why?

The story of your illness – your symptoms, the degree of discomfort, when and where the symptoms started, and other potentially pertinent details are an important part of a proper diagnosis. Telling each doctor your story makes sure that each doctor has an accurate account of your condition. Don't assume each doctor reads notes in your medical record written by other doctors – they frequently do not!

## Don't Push for Tests and Medications

Don't insist that you need tests and/or medications. Conversely, realize you have the right to refuse or delay a medication, test, or treatment, even when in the hospital. If you are not certain that a medication or a procedure is needed, speak up.

### Why?

Americans undergo [too many tests and treatments](#), which is a concern since all medications and procedures have possible side effects and risks .

## Take Charge of Your Medical Records

Bring all your related medical information, including notes from appointments and test results, with you to every appointment. Don't assume each specialist on your team is communicating.

### Why?

Doctors [frequently do not send or receive](#) reports from other doctors. Without an accurate picture of your health, including prior diagnoses, test results, medications, and procedures, it's harder for doctors to properly treat you.

## Take Notes – at Home and at the Doctor's Office

Take notes. Use a notebook to keep track of everything – including your questions and the corresponding answers, symptoms, medications prescribed and used, procedures, test results and any other recommendations and pertinent information.

### Why?

Researchers found that patients cannot accurately remember what they hear during appointments. One study [found that 40-80% of medical information](#) provided by healthcare professionals is forgotten immediately. The greater the amount of information presented, the lower the proportion remembered. Of the information that was remembered, it was found that almost 50% was remembered incorrectly.

## Follow up on Test Results

Follow up on test results with your doctor if you have not heard back within the expected time frame. Never assume that “no news is good news”.



## Why?

Test results can slip through the cracks. Studies show that tests results are often missed when [patients are discharged from the hospital](#). Same thing for patients treated in an [out-patient setting](#). Delayed or missed test results can lead to patient harm if treatments and/or medications are delayed or never started.

## Carry Your Medication List

Always carry your list of medications with you.

## Why?

Without a complete list of your medications, doctors may mistakenly prescribe a medication that interferes negatively with medication you are already taking, potentially leading [to a dangerous “adverse drug reaction”](#).

## How Zaggo Can Help

Zaggo provides patients and their family caregivers with the information and tools they need to become empowered, engaged, effective members of their medical teams. With an easy-to-use guide book and organizational tools necessary to keep healthcare information and documents accessible, the ZaggoCare System is the only product to offer the comprehensive advice and tools needed to help patients and caregivers manage illness or injury – and ultimately, receive the best possible care.

It’s the best gift you can give yourself or a loved one.

For more information, visit [www.zaggocare.org](http://www.zaggocare.org).

