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Help Patients Understand Your Instructions with the Teach Back/Show Me Method

Do you assume that the method you use to communicate with patients is sufficient? A growing body of research demonstrates that patients recall and **comprehend less than half** of what clinicians explain to them. A good way to help confirm your patients' actual level of understanding is by incorporating the "teach back" (also referred to as the "show me") method.

The teach back method simply involves asking your patients to repeat in their own words what they need to do when they leave your office. This method will let you know immediately if there is any misunderstanding of your medical instructions. For example, you could say, "Can you show me how you are going to do this when you get home? I want to make sure that I did a good job explaining this to you." If your patient is not able to repeat the information accurately, try to rephrase your instructions.

You can also encourage your patients to use the "Ask Me 3" approach. "Ask Me 3" is a patient education "teach back" program designed to promote communication between health care providers and patients in order to improve health outcomes. Launched by the [Partnership for Clear Health Communication](#), the program encourages patients to understand the answers to three questions:

1. What is my main problem?
2. What do I need to do?
3. Why is it important for me to do that?

You may download "Ask Me 3" materials free of charge [here](#). Patient brochures are available in one or two-page formats in English, Spanish, French, Chinese, Russian, and Arabic.

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