

# Ask, Talk, Listen

## Tips for Communicating with Patients and Their Families

When patients are upset or worried, they have difficulty hearing, understanding, and remembering information. People forget as much as 80 per cent of the information they are told when they are under stress. This includes situations involving their health care.

Health care professionals work hard to make sure patients receive the best and safest health care possible. The following are some simple tips for communicating with patients which can help lead to safer, better care:

- Show compassion. When people are upset or angry they need to know you care.
- Be polite and professional.
- Be aware of cultural and language barriers.



- Repeat your messages several times.
- Use plain language (avoid medical jargon whenever possible).
- Speak slowly.
- Be aware of your body language.
- Make eye contact. Sit forward in your chair – it demonstrates interest and caring. Don't cross your arms or fidget.
- Allow time for questions
- Enhance your message using visuals such as charts or anatomical models.
- Always ask patients to repeat back what they have heard.