

Caring For People With Chronic Conditions: Communicating With Your Loved One's Doctor

(NAPSA)—More than 65 million people in the United States care for someone with a chronic condition, disability or frailty. These caregivers often accompany their loved ones to doctors' appointments. By making the most of these appointments, caregivers can help improve the care their loved one receives and also ease some of the stress they often experience as a caregiver.

"Clear communication between physicians and caregivers can help make appointments more productive and beneficial for everyone involved, most importantly, the patient and care recipient," said Rhonda Randall, D.O., chief medical officer for United-Healthcare Retiree Solutions. "Remember that you and the physician share a goal: providing the best care for your loved one."

If you are a caregiver, consider these tips:

- **Introduce yourself:** Get permission from your loved one to speak directly with doctors. This typically requires the patient to sign a release form at each doctor's office. Explain your role. Ask questions about diagnoses, medications and ongoing care needs.

- **Educate yourself:** Understanding your loved one's conditions will help you better communicate with doctors and make you a better advocate.

- **Document important information:** Keeping a record of physician contacts, medications, symptoms and health changes will help you remember what to address at each appointment and help the doctor make informed decisions. Ask for copies of test results and keep them for future reference.



It's important for caregivers to know how to properly communicate with their loved one's doctor.

- **Understand health coverage and benefits:** Before appointments, learn what is covered by your loved one's health plan. Ask physicians about the risks, benefits and alternatives to their recommendations and the associated cost. Avoid financial surprises by understanding out-of-pocket costs for appointments, tests or procedures. If you have questions, call the number on the back of the insurance card.

- **Ask questions:** Come to appointments prepared with a list of questions. During the visits, take notes so you can refer to them later.

- **Don't neglect your own health:** Taking care of yourself will put you in the best position to provide care for others. If you care for an older adult or anticipate taking on a caregiver role, you should know about the tools and resources available to make the job of being a caregiver a bit easier.

To learn more and get the support you need, you can visit WhatIsSolutionsForCaregivers.com or call (877) 765-4473. Services are available in all 50 states and can be tailored to meet specific needs.