



How Should I Communicate as a Caregiver?

As a caregiver, you have to communicate with many people: your loved one, family, friends, co-workers, bosses, healthcare professionals and insurance companies. Constructive and effective communication is key to your success.

Although your time and patience may be stretched thin, it's important to stay organized, separate your emotions from your conversations and keep on the subject for each person you talk to. Here are some simple guidelines to help you stay focused and get the best results.



Communication Tips

Talking to your family:

- Talk openly about your fears, worries and needs.
- Remember that everyone is feeling the pressure and insecurity of the event and try to be patient. Give everyone time to adjust in his or her own manner.

Talking to healthcare professionals:

- Write all your questions down to make sure you get all topics covered.
- Keep records of all that occurs with your loved one. It will help the doctor give better treatment.
- Separate your anger and sense of frustration about not being able to help your loved one from your feelings about the doctor. Remember, you are both on the same side.

Talking to your loved one:

- Give both of you time to accept what has happened and realize that your roles may have changed.
- Be assertive, honest, patient and kind.
- Use “I” messages rather than “you” messages. Saying “I feel angry” rather than “You made me angry” enables you to express your feelings without blaming others or causing them to become defensive.
- If your loved one has aphasia after a stroke, find support to help learn the best way to communicate.

If your loved one had a heart attack:

A heart attack frightens everyone. Your loved one will need time to adjust and may be very emotional and sometimes cry for no reason. You both need to communicate your real feelings to each other. You'll also need to help your loved

one follow the doctor's recommendations for the best possible recovery.

Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721) or visit americanheart.org to learn more about heart disease or get help caring for a loved one.

If your loved one had a stroke:

Stroke can have a big impact on your loved one's ability to communicate, especially if your loved one has aphasia. Be willing to accept ANY form of communication as equally

valid: gestures, writing, drawing, using a communication notebook, intonation or speech.

For information on stroke, call 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit StrokeAssociation.org.

What are the warning signs of heart attack and stroke?

Warning Signs of Heart Attack

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, but most of them start slowly with mild pain or discomfort with one or more of these symptoms:

- Chest discomfort
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body
- Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort
- Other signs including breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness

Warning Signs of Stroke

- Sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause

Learn to recognize a stroke. Time lost is brain lost.

Call 9-1-1 ... Get to a hospital immediately if you experience signs of a heart attack or stroke!

Do you have questions or comments for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider. For example:

What can I do to help my loved one get back to as normal a life as possible?

