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How to be Your Best Advocate

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Health Literacy:

The degree to which an individual has the capacity to obtain, communicate, process, and understand basic health information and services to make appropriate health decisions.

Healthy People 2020



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Self Advocacy:

Advocacy is based on the foundation that everyone has the right to be heard, to have their concerns addressed and to be treated with respect and consideration.



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Navigating the Health System

- Complex
- Know health insurance
- Become a partner with your medical provider
- Explore all options to assure you get the best care



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How to be a Health Advocate

- Don't give up when faced with challenges
- Understand your own health
- Prepare to see the doctor
 - Write down any questions or concerns prior to the appointment.
- Educate yourself-
 - Learn about the disease process, treatment, and medications you may be on.



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How to be a Health Advocate

- At your appointment, ask lots of questions.
- Build a relationship and rapport with your doctor.
- Ask for language in plain language.
- Keep records of your healthcare experience
- Communicate your concerns and understand the treatment plan and follow up plan.



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How to be a Health Advocate

- Ask for a second opinion
 - If you aren't happy with what you're being told, ask for a second opinion – it's your right
- Stand up for yourself
- Bring a family member or friend to appointment.



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Healthcare Journal

- Keep medical records or have your medical history included in journal.
- Check your records. It's easy to forget how many times you were hospitalized for chest pain or trouble breathing, etc
- Hospitalizations, Surgeries or major problems, current medical conditions or symptoms, immunizations, allergies (especially drugs or latex)
- Most recent complete physical, pap smear, mammogram, tetanus shot, etc.



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Healthcare Journal

- List all names and phone numbers of your current physicians, including dentist and eye doctor.
- It is extremely important to keep a current list of medications, including dosages and instructions for taking the medication (X per day).
- Write down any questions or concerns prior to visiting your physician.



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Resources

- Lupus Society of Illinois
- Support groups



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Questions?