

Teach-back Method



Improving Patient Understanding

Checking for patient understanding is one way to improve communication and lead to better patient outcomes. You can do this by implementing the teach-back method.

The teach-back method is a way of checking understanding by asking patients to state in their own words what they need to know or do about their health. It is a way to confirm that you have explained things in a manner your patients understand. This method is not a test of the patient's knowledge but a test of how well you explained the concept.

With the **teach-back method**, you will ask open-ended questions.
Examples of questions to check for understanding:

I want to be sure I explained how to take this medicine clearly. Can you please explain it back to me so I can be sure I did?

Why do you think you have this health condition?

When you go home, how will you explain your main health concern to others? Tell me what actions you will take to get better. What will happen if you do not follow these actions?

The AHRO Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit contains additional information about the teach-back method.

Other tips to improve communication between providers and patients include the following:

- Use simple language; stay away from technical or medical jargon
- Create a safe environment where patients feel comfortable talking openly with you
- Sit down (instead of standing) to achieve eye level with your patient
- Use visual models to illustrate a procedure or condition