

Ask Questions and Be Informed

The first step is to educate yourself about your disease. Ask your doctor for information, and use the Internet or local library to research more about it. The federal government offers many reliable websites with accurate and up-to-date information about an array of diseases. You can also turn to disease-based support and advocacy groups to learn more. Being an educated patient will help you to make informed choices that are the key to getting the kind of care you want.

- **Ask questions.** If you don't understand what your doctor is telling you, ask questions. Do not be embarrassed or intimidated. Your doctor wants you to understand your disease and its treatment -- and wants to know how you are coping as you move forward with decisions.
- **Try not to rush into decisions.** When your emotions are high and you are presented with complicated and sometimes confusing information, making decisions can be extremely difficult. Give yourself time to consider your needs and to reflect on your available choices.
- **Turn to the supports your hospital has to offer.** In addition to your doctor, chaplains, social workers, nutritionists and nurses are specially trained as experts in working with very sick patients and their families.
- **Request an interpreter.** If English is not your first language, ask for a health interpreter, someone who is expert at translating medical information. You have the right to an interpreter with almost every provider.