



Tips for Healthcare Professionals Communicating with Older Adults

Use these tips from audiologists and speech-language pathologists to support your communication with those in your care.

1. Engage in shared decision making.

Provide complete, impartial information about the pros and cons associated with each option you are suggesting. Doing so empowers adults and increases their autonomy.

2. Avoid ageist assumptions when discussing preventative care.

Assuming that preventative care is not important after a certain age reduces a person's options—and doesn't treat the individual. Make recommendations that will support both short-term comfort and optimal long-term health solutions.

3. Use direct, concrete, actionable language.

Use concrete language rather than vague or abstract words to improve comprehension. For example: "morning and evening" is easier to understand—and remember—than "twice a day."

4. Keep information simple and digestible.

The way we provide information can be just as important as the information itself. Simplify information to patients, providing key information in a succinct manner. Use a clear outline, then summarize key points or care instructions.



5. Express understanding and compassion—and try to understand values.

Studies have shown there is a relationship between effective patient communication and improved health outcomes.

Show empathy to help older patients manage fear and uncertainty. Seeking information about older adults' values and cultural beliefs relating to illness can lead to better treatment.

6. Verify listener comprehension during discussion.

Giving the person you are speaking to the opportunity to clarify what you say also allows you to ensure that your message was understood.

Ask listeners to explain what they have been told in their own words, instead of using a yes/no approach to verification. Check in frequently throughout the conversation.



Brought to you as part of Talk Spot, an awareness campaign from Speech and Hearing BC: a not-for-profit organization with more than 1200 speech-language pathologists and audiologists in British Columbia. Our vision is optimal communication and swallowing health for all British Columbians. We offer resources and information to members of the public about identifying, living with and treating problems with their speech, language, hearing, voice, swallowing, fluency or social communication.

Talk Spot. Find Yours. Use Yours.
speechandhearingbc.ca
+1 604 420 2222



Speech and Hearing BC