

# All About Aging

by Hong-Phuc Tran, M.D.

## Better Health Through Better Understanding

Have you ever been to a doctor's office, but left without fully understanding your medical conditions and your doctor's recommendations? Ever taken medications without knowing their purpose? Or, perhaps, been hospitalized without knowing your diagnosis, prognosis or after-care instructions?

**Good communication between healthcare providers and their patients** impacts patient safety and overall quality of care, it calls on healthcare providers to speak in patient-friendly terms and for patients and their loved ones to become better advocates by asking questions.

I often see patients in my practice who have little knowledge or understanding of their recent hospitalizations. Some-

times, I am lucky and have the medical records; other times, however, I do not have adequate information. I know that doctor visits are much more satisfying for patients — and their accompanying loved ones — when they have a good understanding of their health. That's why I want my patients to speak up if they do not understand something I say.

Below are some tips to better understand your health and improve communication with your physician or other health provider:

- Ask questions when you do not understand what he or she is saying.
- Ask your doctor to write notes for you if you think you might forget his or her recommendations.



- Keep a list of your medications (including over-the-counter and as-needed medications) and the reasons for taking them. If you have difficulty preparing this list, ask your doctor for help. Remember to bring all of your medications, including the prescription bottles, to help prepare the list.
- Keep a list of your medical conditions, if possible.
- Bring lists of your medications and medical conditions with you to each appointment, especially when you see a new doctor or if you go to the emergency room

Put your doctor to the test. Ask questions until you fully understand his or her answers. Better communication can lead to better care and outcomes!

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