

5 Strategies for Improving Communication with Patients

1	<p>Approach the process as a 2-way conversation between parties seeking mutual understanding and consensus on the best way forward</p> <p>[to a 15-year-old female patient] <i>“Now that you have decided you would like to go ahead with starting on the pill I want to tell you a bit more about exactly how to take it. Once I’ve done that, I’ll double-check the key points with you at the end of the visit to be sure that I have explained it well. Is that ok with you?”</i></p>
2	<p>When speaking, use plain language, break the message down into short statements, and focus on 2-3 most important concepts</p> <p><i>“You need to take the pill every day for it to work. If you miss a pill, you could get pregnant. If you do happen to forget a pill, it should be easy to spot because the package has the day of the week on it. If you see yesterday’s and today’s pills in there, take them both at once.”</i></p> <p><i>“Even if you take your pill every day, it can’t protect you from sexually transmitted infections. You still need to use condoms all the time. And, if you have missed a pill and had to take two at once, it becomes especially important to use condoms to prevent getting pregnant, too, since there is a risk for the entire rest of that month that you could get pregnant – not just on the day you missed a pill.”</i></p>
3	<p>Use a combination of instructional methods (verbal, demonstration, patient practice) and high-quality resources (written, video, audio, web-based, etc)</p> <p><i>“Here is a sample pill pack - yours will look just like this. You can see here where the day of the week is marked. That will help you keep on track. Some people I know also set reminders on their phone to help them remember. What do you think might work best for you?”</i></p> <p><i>“Scarleteen.com is a pretty good website you can go to if you have questions. I know things with ‘teen’ in the name are often really bad, but it has reliable information and is written especially for a teenage audience. Do you want to write the site name down somewhere?”</i></p>
4	<p>Tailor instruction and resource material to patient literacy levels, cultural values, and personal preferences</p> <p><i>“I know you don’t want you parents to know that you’re going on the pill. I just want to remind you that everything we talk about is confidential – I can’t tell your parents, even if they asked me about it (ie. it’s the law). In my experience, parents usually do find out at some point, though. If that happens, how do you think they might respond?”</i></p>
5	<p>Assess for understanding and effectiveness of educational approach</p> <p><i>“We just covered a lot of information and I want to make sure I have explained everything well. Can you remind me what we said about taking your pill every day?”</i></p>

From UBC Resident as Teachers Patient Education Module