

# Advocacy Guide

Advocating for yourself can be difficult. It is my hope that this guide will assist and empower you along your journey to Wellness Through Awareness. The reverse of this page has helpful tips and descriptions for enhanced use.

Why is advocacy important for your health? How will you benefit? \_\_\_\_\_

Who currently acts as an advocate for you? \_\_\_\_\_

Are your needs being met? What is going well, what isn't? \_\_\_\_\_

What type of support do you need? \_\_\_\_\_

Is there someone who you might want to be your advocate? \_\_\_\_\_

Know your history and manage your records. Keep updated copies of:

- Health Conditions & Allergies
- Doctors & Contact Information
- Medications, Supplements, Treatments
- Labs & Tests
- Insurance Information
- Goals & Advanced Directives
- Failed Therapies or Interventions
- Successful Therapies or Interventions

Health goals/Treatment goals: \_\_\_\_\_

Prepare for your appointments:

- Confirm Date & Location.
- Advocate Available?
- Health History, Medication List
- New Concerns or Changes
- Lab & Test Results
- Questions

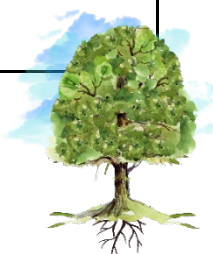
Decision making:

Problem			
What happens if I do nothing?			
Option			
Risks			
Benefits			
Considerations			
Alternatives			
Second Opinion			



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# Helpful Tips & Descriptions

**Why is advocacy important for your health? How will you benefit?** Answering this question will drive everything else here. It will give you focus. Think about the issues you are currently facing or concerns you may have. Some may have the goal to reduce the risk of complications, incorrect treatments, unnecessary procedures, and the increased success of interventions. Some may also be working to overcome fear or intimidation they experience when faced with medical professionals. Others may have actual or perceived deficits in memory, knowledge, or communication such as hearing, processing, or speaking.

**Who currently acts as an advocate for you?** Do you take anyone with you to appointments? Do you have someone who discusses your health concerns with you in detail? When you face a complication who do you go to for advice? A friend, family member, health coach?

**Are your needs being met? What is going well, what isn't?** How do you feel when leaving appointments? Hopeful, depressed, confused, empowered, or encouraged?

**What type of support do you need?** Someone to go to appointments with you? Someone to discuss health with before or after? Someone who assists you during hospital stays? Help following your treatment plan or provides education on your conditions? Help making appointments or communicating with providers between appointments? Coordinating insurance benefits or financial barriers?

**Is there someone who you might want to be your advocate?** Things to consider: personalities, time/availability, and knowledge. Is there more than one person who can help? Do these people play different roles? Does the individual WANT to help? Is there someone you might not be considering because you feel like a burden or embarrassment? \*Advocates are there to support your goals. Consider if your advocate will respect your wishes and choices, as well as what you will do if they are unable to do so.

**Health & Treatment goals:** Health and treatment goals vary person to person. How will things like your overall health, life stage, personal experiences, spiritual or religious beliefs shape your wishes? Have you considered balance between western medicine, holistic, or purely natural modalities?

**Prepare for your appointments:** What is the appointment for? Review the notes from your last appointment. Do you need to follow up on anything? Did you follow through with the plan from the last appointment? Have you had to make modifications? Are you still experiencing barriers to following your treatment plan? Have you had any changes in medications, symptoms, or quality of life? Have you had any new conditions diagnosed? Are there any labs that you are concerned with? Are you taking an advocate? Do they agree with the above? Is there any input from other family members/friends? Do you have a list of questions or concerns to take with you?

**Decision Making:** Decision making for new conditions or illnesses can be a daunting task. You may even feel like there is only one option. Unfortunately, providers often only offer one solution to a problem. They are taught which treatments work best for most patients. However, each patient is different and deserves to make an informed decision guided by their own health history, personal experiences, beliefs, and most of all their goals for care. You can use the table to help get started.

First, ask the doctor what the problem is, and what the most likely cause is. If you can identify the problem and why it started, you have a better chance at resolution rather than long term symptom management. \*If your problem is the result of lifestyle choices, understand that making those changes will be a necessary part of your treatment plan for long term success.

Then ask, what happens if I choose not to use a treatment. Understand what the diagnosis and quality of life looks like without intervention. Next, review each treatment option, the risks, benefits, and special considerations of each option in detail. Finally, ask about any alternatives not reviewed. It is advisable to review risks, benefits, & considerations for these as well.

When making big decisions second opinions can be very helpful, you may learn more information or about other options. Getting a second opinion is not an insult to your doctor, it is prudence.

Keep in mind most decisions do not need to be made immediately. If you are feeling pressured you can ask, "What will happen if I wait 2 weeks to decide treatment?"