

TIPS FOR CARING FOR A FAMILY MEMBER

Being in the role of caregiver for a family member may also include playing the role of health care advocate for that loved one when a medical issue or question arises. Becoming an advocate can be very challenging and frustrating, but also rewarding due to how positively advocacy can impact a family member's health care.

The objective of advocacy is to help the patient more easily navigate the complexities of the healthcare world, including issues around treatment, medical insurance, and emotional support.

If in the role of health care advocate for a loved one, consider the following tips before heading into a medical appointment:

1. **Learn about the illness.** Knowledge is a powerful tool. Information about the course of the illness and treatment will help you navigate the best care for the family member.
2. **Make your physician your ally.** Contact the physician's office prior to the appointment to arrange for extra time in order to have your questions answered.
3. **Be prepared.** Make a list of questions that are pertinent to the family member's care and treatment, and include recent changes or symptoms of the illness.
4. **Be organized.** Carry a list of medications that includes over-the-counter medications, prescribed medications, and vitamin/herbal supplements.
5. **Be assertive.** During the appointment, have the physician address the family member's questions or concerns first.
6. **Be thorough.** At the end of the appointment, summarize and review with the physician and family member the outcome of the visit in order to make sure that everyone is on the same page concerning care and treatment.
7. **Get a second opinion.** If you or the family member is uncomfortable with the physician's answers or services, look for another provider. Even if the recommendations are the same, hearing a different medical perspective can be beneficial to better understanding the illness, treatment, and options.

If you have any questions pertaining to providing care to a family member, please give our Personal Health Partners a call at 800-327-7272.

