Using Plain Language to Communicate with Patients and Caregivers

Why is using plain language important?

When you use plain language, it creates a safe, shame- and blame-free environment for all of our patients and caregivers and provides them with the right information, at the right time and in the right way.

Remember to:

1

Slow down and listen. Consider your nonverbal cues.
- ☐ I am delivering complex information at a reasonable pace
- ☐ I am truly listening to understand

2

Use clear, non-medical language.
- ☐ I am avoiding using language I would normally use with my colleagues

3

Consider alternatives to verbal teaching.
- ☐ I am asking the patient and or caregiver about their preferred learning style (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, thinking)

4

Use the "teach-back" or return demonstration method.
- ☐ I am asking patients to try to explain in their own words the key parts of what I said
- ☐ I am asking open-ended questions

5

Deliver information in a concise manner.
- ☐ I am providing a maximum of only 3 to 4 points per visit

CCO Mississauga Halton Central West
Regional Cancer Program
in partnership with Cancer Care Ontario

What is Teach Back?

Teach Back is a way to check whether your patients understand and can use the health information and instructions you explained to them.

This is not a test for the patient - it is to see how well you explained a concept.

Three steps to the process:

1 **Explain by chunking the information**

2 **Check for understanding**

3 **Re-explain or re-teach using a different method, if needed**

Examples of Teach Back:

- I teach this information a lot and sometimes forget to include everything. Please explain what we just discussed, so I can be sure I include everything and it was clear.

- What will you tell your family about the changes we made to your medicine today?

- Let's review the main side effects of this new medicine. What are the 2 things that I asked you to watch out for and to let me know if you get them?