

What Health Professionals Say/What Patients Hear

*Instructor
Directions:*

The purpose of this exercise is to help students realize how much they do and do not understand. Paraphrasing back to a health professional is a good strategy to self-check for comprehension, and this activity will give students practice doing so. Encourage students to practice asking the “health professional” questions on anything they don’t understand. Remind students that health professionals often use medical terms that are not familiar to patients, and patients may need to persist in getting their questions answered.

Select at least two of the following health situations. Play the part of the health professional and have the class play the part of the patient. Read aloud the information the health professional is telling a patient. Then, in pairs, have students paraphrase what you just read aloud. Have the class summarize the key points.

#1: Well Care Visit/Clinic

You’ve told me about a few concerns during this visit today, but because of time constraints, I’d like to focus on the most worrisome issue which, at this time, is your high blood pressure (hypertension). Let’s work on getting your blood pressure under control. During your next visit(s), we’ll tackle the other concerns you brought up today.

#2: Well Care Visit/Clinic

We did a complete blood work-up at your last visit. It showed an elevated blood glucose (sugar) level. I’m worried that you may have diabetes and, with this test result and your family history of diabetes, I’d like to do a fasting blood glucose test. What you’ll need to do is fast after midnight tonight, drinking only water after midnight, and come to the lab in the morning to have some blood drawn.

#3: Sick Visit/Clinic

You came in with a fever and sore throat. Your physical exam revealed an inflamed (red) throat. I also saw some white substance that can indicate an infection. Because of these findings, I’d like to perform a test to rule out strep throat.

What Health Professionals Say/What Patients Hear, continued**#4: Emergency Care/ER**

Because your blood glucose level is dangerously elevated, we need to admit you into the hospital for a couple of days in order to bring down and stabilize your blood glucose levels with IV fluids and insulin.

#5: Emergency Care/ER

We've cleaned out the wound and placed five sutures to close it up. You need to keep the wound clean and dry for the next couple of days. After that you may take the bandage off and wash the wound with soap and water. Then, place a small amount of this antibiotic ointment on the wound. Come back to the emergency room in a few days for a wound check, then return to the ER in 10-14 days for suture removal. If you notice any discharge, excessive swelling from the wound, or fever, return to the ER right away.

#6: Non-Emergency Care/Phone Call

The symptoms you are describing sound like you have a viral upper respiratory tract infection. Take Tylenol for the fever and sore throat. You can treat your cough with cough syrup. If your fever persists or goes higher, call us back or go to your nearest ER (emergency room).

#7: Preventive Care/Screening Test

Because you are over 50, we'd like you to undergo a colonoscopy. It's a screening test for colon cancer. It doesn't mean that I believe you have cancer, it's just a standard practice of care to try to catch the disease early.

What Health Professionals Say/What Patients Hear, continued**#8: Prescription Use/Instructions**

I am giving you a prescription that you'll need to have filled at a pharmacy. The prescription is for amoxicillin, an antibiotic to treat your UTI (urinary tract infection). You need to take 1 tablet two times a day until the medication is gone, even if you start feeling better in a day or two.

#9: Medication/Side Effects

To treat your high cholesterol, I'm prescribing niacin. A common side effect from niacin is facial flushing and a feeling of warmth. The flushing should stop after a few weeks. If it continues and you are too uncomfortable, call me and we can change your medication.

#10: High Blood Pressure

Your blood pressure has improved from your last visit. However, it is still too high. You have made some healthy changes in your diet, but that doesn't seem to be enough. Before I prescribe some medication to treat your high blood pressure, let's try one more thing to reduce it. You mentioned that you are doing about 15 minutes of physical activity daily. Let's see what happens when you do 30 minutes of moderate physical activity every day for the next 4 weeks. Come back in 1 month and we'll check your blood pressure again.
