

Tool 8. Teachback Method

Studies have shown that 40-80 percent of the medical information patients receive is forgotten immediately and nearly half of the information retained is incorrect. One of the easiest ways to close the gap of communication between clinician and patient is to employ the “teach-back” method, also known as the “show-me” method or “closing the loop.” Teach-back is a way to confirm that you have explained to the patient what they need to know in a manner that the patient understands. Patient understanding is confirmed when they explain it back to you. It can also help the clinic staff members identify explanations and communication strategies that are most commonly understood by patients.

Try the teach-back method.

- Start Slowly. Initially, you may want to try it with the last patient of the day.
- Plan your approach. Think about how you will ask your patient to teach-back information based on the topic you are reviewing. Keep in mind that some situations will not be appropriate for using the teach-back method.
- Use handouts. Reviewing written materials to reinforce the teaching points can be very helpful for patient understanding.
- Clarify. If patients cannot remember or accurately repeat what you asked them, clarify your information or directions and allow them to teach it back again. Do this until the patient is able to correctly describe in their own words what they are going to do, without parroting back what you said.
- Practice. It may take some getting used to, but studies show that once established as part of a routine, it does not take longer to perform.