

Top 10 Tips to Making Patient Education Successful

1. **Be Focused** – separate the “need to know” information from the “nice to know”. Be realistic about the expected behavioral changes the information is intended to bring about.
2. **Assess the Patient** – What information does the patient need to learn and what do they already know about it. Identify any barriers to learning.
3. **Listen to the Patient** – listen to what the patient is saying for valuable information that may impact your teaching. Incorporate the principles of therapeutic communication.
4. **Keep It Simple** – Avoid long explanations. Give information in sequence patient will use it. A 5th grade reading level is a good rule.
5. **Know the Patient’s Motivation** – the patient must place value on the material. Include patient in planning the goals for the teaching.
6. **Consider Time Constraints** – Patients may have a limited attention span due to various factors. Length of stay is short. Plan ahead and prepare for learning needs.
7. **Pick the Appropriate Strategy** – Use a variety of teaching methods. Visual aids, ‘hands-on’ experience, written materials, and repetition are good. Give positive feedback throughout the teaching session.
8. **Know Your Resources** – Keep a list of possible resources, referrals, and phone numbers the patient might need.
9. **Document Your Teaching** – accurate documentation is essential for legal implications. Identify who taught, what was taught, any barriers to learning, what teaching strategy was used, and feedback mechanism was used. Note if any written materials were given.
10. **Trust Yourself** – Patient education is an important nursing responsibility. Nurses have the knowledge and ability to do good patient teaching.

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