

# Need-to-know Need-to-do Concepts and Tasks for Teaching

It takes practice to focus on the **need-to-know** concepts and **need-to-do** tasks when teaching patients, families, and clients, and checking for understanding with teach-back. We want to impart all relevant information, but it is important to recognize that too much information can overwhelm people and prevent them from understanding and remembering the most important content. Another way of saying this is to focus on the **need-to-know** as opposed to **nice-to-know** information.

The **Need-to-Know Need-to-Do Worksheet** can help you think through the most important content for each topic you teach. You can start by completing it and testing your messages with a small number of patients or clients. You may learn there are better ways to phrase some teaching points, or you can add, remove, or replace some of your concepts based on people's ability to teach back and their feedback. See PDSA, [PDSA Template](#), and [PDSA Example](#). Remember, if you have more than one Teaching Topic, use Chunk and Check; teach and check for understanding for the first topic before moving to the next.

Here is an example of three or four teaching points identified after thinking through the need-to-know need-to-do concepts to focus on when responding in the following scenario:

An otherwise healthy adult with a viral upper respiratory infection is asking for antibiotics "because I always get a sinus infection when I have a cold and my other doctor always prescribes antibiotics."

Possible Teaching Points	Teaching Topic: Why antibiotics are not needed. Need-to-know or need-to-do Teaching Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Colds are caused by viruses so no need for antibiotics</li><li>● How antibiotics work</li><li>● When to check with your provider based on expected course and length of illness</li><li>● Common organisms causing colds</li><li>● Cold symptoms</li><li>● How the body fights colds</li><li>● Downside of antibiotics</li><li>● Pathophysiology of sinusitis</li><li>● Things to do to feel better when you have a cold</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Colds are caused by viruses so no need for antibiotics</li><li>● When to check with your provider based on expected course and length of illness</li><li>● Downside of antibiotics</li></ul>

"Things to do to feel better when you have a cold," may also be a helpful teaching topic, depending on why the patient is asking for antibiotics: Are they asking just because they always get them? Do they think the antibiotics make them feel or get better sooner? It helps to discern the reason underlying the request when identifying your teaching topic and associated need-to-know need-to-do teaching points..

See [Need-to-Know Need-to-Do Worksheet; Need-to-Know Need-to-Do Worksheet - Example - Clinical](#); and [Need-to-Know Need-to-Do Worksheet - Example - Public Health](#).