

Include Family Caregivers When Using Teach-back



Stress, worry, pain, or a barrage of new information can overwhelm anyone. Family caregivers, who include designated family members or other individuals who provide care or support to a patient or client, can help. They can also provide useful input for improving processes.

Deciding to Engage Family Caregivers

- Include family members, caregivers, or other support persons when present and appropriate, for example, when a patient or client:
 - Has a designated advocate.
 - Hasn't been able to teach back accurately after several tries.
 - May have trouble understanding or remembering—for example, due to a medication effect, health condition, or the complexity of information.
 - Asks to include them.
- Determine which person(s) to include in discussion and teach-back, depending on the circumstances.
 - Who will be helping the patient or client at home?
 - Who is available nearby or remotely?
- Identify:
 - What the caregiver or support person needs to know or be a part of, e.g., the patient's or client's need to understand or do important activities like taking medicines, attending appointments, or preparing or obtaining meals or special diets.
 - Whether the caregiver or support person needs to be involved in teaching with teach-back.

When Engaging Family Caregivers

- Include the patient or client as the main person in the discussion and teach-back process.
 - Once they are able to teach back, then use teach-back with the caregiver to confirm they understand must-know or must-do information.
- If the patient or client is unable to participate in the discussion or to teach back, the caregiver may be the main person to include in the discussion and teach-back process.
 - Ask the support person to teach back the vital few things the patient or client must know or do.
- If neither can teach back accurately after a few tries, a different plan of care may be needed.
 - For guidance and story examples, See [When People Cannot Teach Back Accurately](#).
- Include older children and teens in the discussion and teach-back process when possible, keeping in mind their developmental status. While it is important for parents to be involved, it is also essential to focus on the child or teen, especially as they develop more independence and need to learn to assume responsibility for their health.
 - Explain by saying “Since you will be spending more time on your own, I want to be sure I clearly give you all the information you need to take care of yourself and make healthy choices.”
 - Depending on the topic, circumstances, and complexity, children can be asked to teach back starting around 7 years of age.
 - **Younger child:** To be sure I did a good job going over how you can keep your teeth healthy and strong, could you please tell me how often you will brush your teeth?
 - **Early teen:** To be sure I explained ways that work for you to get plenty of calcium through what you eat, could you go over the foods you will look for that have a lot of calcium in them?
 - **Older teen:** To make sure I went over things clearly and in a way that works for you, can you go over what you will tell your friends about drinking and driving?
- Offer ways for caregivers to provide feedback, input, or suggestions to support the patient or client in carrying out their self-care.

Engaging Family Caregivers in Improving Your Teach-back Processes

Caregivers can also help you improve your teach-back processes. They can:

- Provide input about their own or their family member's experience with learning important new information.
- Provide feedback about teaching and teach-back processes. You can invite them to provide such input generally or ask specific questions about how the process went when you are conducting small tests of change. See [PDSA Template](#) and [PDSA Example](#).
- Participate in focus groups or other group input sessions.
- Be invited to share their stories about good and not-so-good health teaching and explanations, and how teach-back was helpful. These can be used to raise awareness and in training as you work toward advancing use of teach-back and as a health literate organization.

See [Engaging Patients and Clients](#).