

TOP TIPS FOR NURSES

Educating people with arthritis about drug treatments.

As a nurse, you play a vital role in helping people with arthritis understand their treatments. Below, we're sharing top tips for educating your patients about the drugs they've been prescribed to treat their condition:



Provide written information to the patient before their appointment.

By giving someone written information before their appointment, you can spend your interview time addressing what the patient wants to talk about.



Set the baseline.

Personalise your approach to the individual patient.

Find out what they already know about their drug treatment and what they want to learn.



Chunk and check.

Present a 'chunk' – or a section – of information.

Then, check to make sure that the patient understands.

For example, you could ask an open question, such as
“What have you understood about what I have told you?”



Avoid information overload.

Remember that the patient has written information and additional opportunities to learn about their drug treatment. That means that you should not worry if you miss something in your discussion.

However, you should make sure the patient gets the minimum information that they need for their own safety. See 'Minimum information' below.



Let the patient talk.

Do not dominate the conversation, and do not interrupt.

Legitimise the patient's point of view.



Listen and watch.

Make sure that, while you're listening, you pay attention to both verbal and physical cues:

- Is your patient giving you a signal that they want to discuss a topic?
- If you use hand gestures when you talk, make sure they illustrate what you're saying.
- Are you sure that your patient understands? Be aware that nodding is often defensive, not a sign of agreement.
- A patient who appears agitated or who interrupts may not understand what you've told them.



Summarise what you have discussed.

Together with the patient, summarise your conversation.



Ask questions.

You may want to ask, **“What questions do you have?”** and **“How confident do you feel on a scale of one to ten?”**



Give written information.

This should include information about the service, monitoring and any methods to get in touch in between appointments, such as a helpline.

Minimum information

You should always give a patient the following minimum information about their drug treatment.

This is for their safety:

1. What to take and how to take it.

For example, tell the patient the number of tablets they should take and the frequency of the dose.

2. How long methotrexate takes to work.

3. Monitoring requirements.

You may need to explain to the patient that, if they do not get monitoring, they cannot take the drug.

4. Whether changes the patient experiences could be related to the drug.

Consult the drug's information leaflet.

5. Potentially serious issues.

For methotrexate, these include infections, fever, shortness of breath and pregnancy.

6. The helpline number to call if the patient needs assistance.

Thank you!


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If you have any comments or feedback on this publication, please submit them using the following link: www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/MTXTopTips


Versus Arthritis Top Tips for Nurses: educating people with arthritis about drug treatments

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