

HEALTHCARE SELF-ADVOCACY TIPS

FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH MS

WHAT IS SELF-ADVOCACY?



Self-advocacy is the practice of representing yourself, your interests, and your experiences in regard to your MS. The goal is to ensure that your needs and priorities are at the center of your MS treatment.

THE BASICS

PREPARE IN ADVANCE

A huge part of effectively communicating about your MS is preparation. Think about exactly what you want your healthcare provider to understand about you and your situation before going in for a visit. Write it down, so that you are able to communicate it fully and clearly.

Remember that interactions with medical professionals are still human interactions. Being kind and respectful will ensure that other people listen to your well-thought-out concerns and needs. However, keep in mind that being respectful does not mean accepting when others are dismissive. If something is important to you, do not be afraid to firmly assert it.

BE RESPECTFUL BUT FIRM

BRING A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND

If you're worried about how to advocate for yourself, bring someone along who knows your situation well. You could even role play the visit with them in advance so they are fully aware of what you hope to communicate.

If you're not feeling sufficiently supported by your care provider, don't be afraid to get a second opinion or find a new doctor. A big part of respecting your own needs is knowing you have the right to explore your options.

GET A SECOND OPINION

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Medical Self-Advocacy: Getting More from your Healthcare Team](#)
National MS Society

This video features a discussion with Marion Brandis, MA, RN, BSN, who talks about how people with multiple sclerosis can get more from their healthcare teams.

[ADA Resources](#)
US Department of Justice

The U.S. Department of Justice provides information about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and answers to specific technical questions, which can be a great reference tool.

[WCA Advocacy Toolkit](#)
Disability Rights WI

This (general) Advocacy Tool Kit from the Wisconsin Coalition for Advocacy provides individuals with information and skill building exercises for self-advocacy.

[Questions and Answers](#)
Can Do MS

The question and answer portion of Can Do MS's website has a lot of self-advocacy related responses to common questions for PwMS.