

10 Patient Empowerment Tips for Your Refrigerator Door



1. **Become the expert in your own medical challenges.** Read everything you can about your symptoms or diagnosis, ask questions, study anatomy, acquire and review copies of all your medical records. Be the authority on YOU.
2. Using your YOU expertise, **partner with your doctors and other providers.** While they may have a medical education and experience, YOU are the one who has lived in your body your entire life. If your provider won't listen to you, or share in your decision-making, then find one who will.
3. **Pursue a second opinion** whenever you are diagnosed with a difficult disease or condition, or surgery, chemo, or long term treatment are prescribed. And if they disagree? Then seek a third.
4. **Don't be afraid to say NO.** Sometimes less is more. As the authority on YOU, you'll know when NO is the right answer.
5. **Thank your doctors and their staff members** when they have been collaborative and helpful. They work in a tough environment. Appreciation, when appropriate, can go a long way toward strengthening your partnership.
6. **Read and listen past the headlines.** Get the whole story, then pursue additional, objective resources to confirm their veracity and to determine how well they apply to YOU. In particular, be sure Internet information is credible.
7. **Review your medical bills.** Experts tell us that up to 80 percent of medical bills contain errors. Incorrect bills will eventually cost us all in higher premiums and taxes.
8. **Provide support to others.** Shared experiences can help others who suffer the same medical challenges you do. Refer them to good doctors, and support groups, and offer an ear when they want to share their joys, or need to vent.
9. **Accept support from others.** Whether it's a loved one, or a professional, sometimes it's imperative to have an advocate by your side to keep YOU safe, or keep you from being railroaded.
10. Finally, **wash your hands regularly and cough or sneeze into your elbow.** Infections are dangerous and deadly whether acquired during a hospital stay, or brought home from school by the kids. Hygiene can go a long way toward keeping infection at bay and keeping YOU healthy.

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