



  English

Being My Own Advocate

Being My Own Advocate

By Danielle V

CATEGORIES

[Physical health](#)

≡ [General](#)

 [Family](#)

 [Wellness](#)





October is Health Literacy Month, and it's a really important cause to me. Health literacy is how well you understand health terms to make the best decisions for your health. The world of health care can be super confusing, which can be dangerous. If you don't understand how to take a medicine you're prescribed, and don't take it properly, you might make yourself sicker or unknowingly harm yourself. If you don't understand discharge instructions at the hospital (like how to care for stitches or a broken bone), you might end up having to go back, and if you don't understand something your doctor tells you, you might be putting yourself in all kinds of danger.

This is why it's important to advocate for your own health and take an active role in managing and understanding your health care. Being as informed as possible will help you make the best decisions for your own health. When I was a kid, my parents were my health advocates. They would make sure I stayed up to date on my vaccines, saw my doctor regularly, and they would ask the doctor questions to make sure they fully understood everything. As I've gotten older and have become my own health advocate, I've learned that it's not always easy, even for someone like me, whose job it is to make complex health information easier to understand.

There are a few habits I've adopted over the years that really help. I'm a writer, so, naturally, writing things down and taking notes was the first thing I started doing at

doctor's appointments. This made a huge difference in helping me remember everything the doctor said. Taking notes plus bringing a family member or friend when I can is even better, because they may pick up on things that I didn't. I also come prepared with my own notes about my medical history, my family history, and a list of medications I take. Writing everything down ahead of time helps make sure I don't forget anything, and hopefully makes things easier for my doctor.

I also bring a list of any questions I want to make sure to ask the doctor, especially if I'm going to an annual physical or exam and it's been a year since I've seen them – I want to make sure everything gets addressed! This is really helpful if I'm thinking about adding a new vitamin to my daily regimen and I want to make sure there are no risks in doing so, or if I'm thinking about trying out something as simple as a new workout. Even if it feels like a stupid or irrelevant question, I ask it anyway, because the more I know, the better advocate I can be for myself.

The best thing I've learned to do to be my own advocate is to be honest with my doctors and to not be afraid to interrupt them if I need to. If their explanations aren't making sense or are completely confusing to me, I always stop them and ask them to explain whatever it is in simpler words. If I don't do this, then my doctors will wrongly assume that I understand everything they're saying, and that could be bad – I might not understand the correct way to take a medication, or I might not completely understand the potential risks of a procedure I'm going to have.

Health literacy and being your own health advocate may feel intimidating, but it's something we all should do. Taking notes at my doctor's appointments, being prepared with my health information and questions, being honest with my doctors, and never being afraid to ask questions have all helped me so much as I've navigated living with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS). It also helped a lot when I moved to Colorado from New York and had to find new doctors who were definitely unfamiliar with my care. It helps me know that I'm getting the best care I can for myself, and I hope that these tips will help you get the best care you can, too.

1. gov/healthliteracy/learn/index.html#:~:text=The%20Patient%20Protection%20and%20Affordable,to%20make%20appropriate%20health%20decisions
2. com/healthy-aging/features/be-your-own-health-advocate#1
3. usnews.com/health-news/patient-advice/articles/2015/02/02/6-ways-to-be-your-own-health-advocate

Nonprofit health plan founded in 1994 offering Medicaid services to individuals and families.

Members

Find a Provider

Contact Us

Get Involved

Features

Partnering for Colorado

Media

Blog

Providers

Become a Provider

Provider Toolkit

Find a Form

Quick Links

Contact Us

Careers

Social Media

Facebook

Instagram

YouTube

LinkedIn

Glassdoor

X

© 2026 Colorado Access.

[Privacy Policy](#) [Terms of Use](#) [Nondiscrimination Notice](#)