

Communicating With Patients and Families Around Antibiotic Decisions

Patients want to feel HEARD¹⁻⁵	• Say: “What I am hearing you say is [repeat the main concerns].” • Make sure you are looking at the camera. This will make it clear that you are making eye contact. • Nod your head to indicate you are listening and acknowledging the concerns. • When performing the virtual physical exam, verbally state the pertinent negatives based on the review of symptoms. “The good news is that you look like you are breathing normally.” • Let the patient know that if you are typing while he/she is speaking, it is only so that you can accurately document everything that you are being told. Look at the patient frequently in between typing.
Patients want their feelings VALIDATED¹⁻⁵	• Say: “I am glad you came in today.” • Say: “I am sorry you are not feeling well.” • Say: “It sounds like you are not feeling well. Let me see how I can help.”
Patients want something that will make them FEEL BETTER¹⁻⁵	• Explain why an antibiotic is not needed. • Say: “The good news is that you do not need an antibiotic.” • Say: “Fortunately, you do not need an antibiotic; here are a few other things I can offer you to help you feel better.” • Say: “We now know that sometimes antibiotics can cause problems, like diarrhea or bad rashes. The good news is that we can discuss other options that can help you feel better.” • Provide positive treatment recommendations: specific recommendations for symptom relief.
Patients want to know when they will GET BETTER and when to RETURN to medical attention¹⁻⁵	• Provide details about when the patient is expected to feel better. • Provide a contingency plan: specific guidance on when and where to return to medical attention. • Request the patient repeat the plan and when to return to medical care to avoid misunderstandings. • Say: “Since you have [insert diagnosis], you may continue to feel sick for the next [insert anticipated duration of illness], but the [insert symptoms] should gradually improve by [insert duration of illness]. [Insert examples of when the patient should seek additional care, either over telemedicine, in-person, or emergency department care].”

References

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