YWCA Women's Health Advocacy Toolkit

Clarity. Confidence. Collaboration.

Patient Advocacy & Language You Can Use

Self advocacy is informed preparation, not confrontation. Your goal is not to win a conversation. **Your goal is to improve your outcome.**

Prepare For Your Appointment

- Write down your top one or two concerns and clarify your goal for the visit
- List symptoms with timing and duration
- Bring a current medication list with dosages
- Know your allergies

☐ **Opening language:** My main concern today is ____. I want to make sure we address this before I leave. I'd love to hear your recommendations, and I also have some questions.

Ask Collaborative Questions

Collaborative language increases clarity and lowers defensiveness. The goal is not to soften your concern, it is to increase the quality of the response.

Instead of:	**Try:**
Why are you giving me this?	How will this help my symptoms?
Why didn't this work?	What are our next steps if this approach is not effective?
Why won't you order this test?	What factors guide your decision about this test?
I am concerned my symptoms are not fully understood. Can we review them again?	I am concerned my symptoms are not fully understood. Can we review them again?

If You Feel Dismissed

You are allowed to redirect the conversation. Say:

> *I am not comfortable leaving without understanding this better.*

> *I would like to revisit my main issue before we move on.*

To Increase Trust In Your Medical Provider

Most providers want to help. Begin with collaboration. Escalate if necessary. You can:

- Bring a support person
- Request copies of your records
- Seek culturally concordant providers
- Use trusted community referrals
- Change providers if desired

> **Second Opinions** provide a new perspective or confirm the original recommendation. Confirmation itself strengthens confidence and improves follow-through and outcomes.

Created by Dr. Jillian Woodruff, MD — Board-Certified Gynecologic Surgeon | Women's Health Educator

Your Rights as a Patient

In Outpatient and Hospital Settings, You Have the Right To:

- Clear explanations of diagnoses and treatment options
- Informed consent before procedures
- Refuse treatment after understanding consequences
- Privacy and confidentiality
- Seek a second opinion

Asking questions is participation, not disrespect.

Medical Records

- You have the legal right to access your records.
- You may request correction of factual errors.
- You may request that your clarification be added to the chart.

Accuracy matters. Your record follows you.

Hospital-Specific Rights

- Know the name and role of people entering your room
- Request a patient advocate
- Ask for discharge instructions in writing

Photos and Identification

Many healthcare facilities take photographs and scan identification to reduce errors and protect safety. Transparency builds trust, so ask how your information is stored and accessed.

AI in Healthcare

Artificial intelligence assists with documentation and decision support but doesn't replace medical judgment. Always read your visit notes and request clarification for any inaccuracies.

For more women's health education and conversations, listen to The Modern Midlife Collective podcast.

Scan here →

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