



Tool 3.1: Recommendations for communicating with older adults¹⁷

General tips for improving interactions with older adults

1. Recognise the tendency to stereotype older adults, then conduct your own assessment.
2. Avoid speech that might be seen as patronising to an older person (“elderspeak”).

General tips for improving face-to-face communication with older adults

3. Monitor and control your non-verbal behaviour.
4. Minimise background noise.
5. Face older adults when you speak with them, with your lips at the same level as theirs.
6. Pay close attention to sentence structure when conveying critical information.
7. Use visual aids such as pictures and diagrams to help clarify and reinforce comprehension of key points.
8. Ask open-ended questions and genuinely listen.

Tips for optimising interactions between health care professionals and older patients

9. Express understanding and compassion to help older patients manage fear and uncertainty related to the ageing process and chronic diseases.
10. Ask questions about an older adult’s living situation and social contacts.
11. Include older adults in the conversation even if their companion is in the room.
12. Customise care by seeking information about older adults’ cultural beliefs and values pertaining to illness and death.
13. Engage in shared decision-making.
14. Strike an appropriate balance between respecting patients’ autonomy and stimulating their active participation in health care.
15. Avoid ageist assumptions when providing information and recommendations about preventive care.
16. Providing information to patients is important, but how you give information to patients may be even more important.
17. Use direct, concrete, actionable language when talking to older adults.
18. Verify listener comprehension during a conversation.
19. Set specific goals for listener comprehension.
20. Incorporate both technical knowledge and emotional appeal when discussing treatment regimens with older patients.
21. To provide quality health care, focus on enhancing patient satisfaction.
22. Use humour and a direct communication style with caution when interacting with non-Western older patients.
23. Help Internet-savvy older adults with chronic diseases find reputable sources of online support.
24. If computers are used during face-to-face visits with older adults, consider switching to models that facilitate collaborative use.

17 http://aging.arizona.edu/sites/aging/files/activity_1_reading_1.pdf