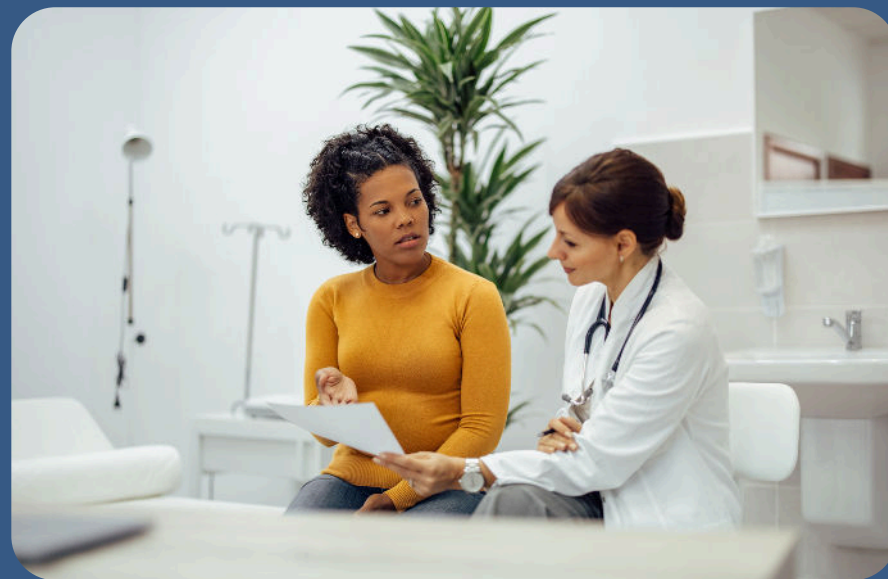


# THE POWER OF SELF-ADVOCACY IN CANCER CARE

## Navigating Difficult Conversations With Your Medical Team



A cancer diagnosis can be one of the most overwhelming and challenging experiences a person can face. It is a journey fraught with physical, emotional, and logistical hurdles. However, amidst the uncertainties and difficulties, self-advocacy emerges as a powerful tool that empowers patients throughout their cancer care journey.

### Self-advocacy, what is it?

Self-advocacy in cancer care means actively participating in your healthcare decisions, expressing your needs and concerns, and ensuring that your voice is heard throughout the treatment process. It is about becoming an informed and engaged partner in your medical team and making decisions that align with your values and goals.

For some, self-advocacy can be stressful, especially when it comes to communicating your wishes with your medical team. Many feel uncomfortable asking too many questions to medical professionals, who may seem overly busy; not wanting to add to their plate and be perceived as anything other than a "good patient". However, it is your right as a patient to ensure that you receive quality, comprehensive care and that your questions and concerns are addressed. Being an active participant in your cancer care means asking questions and voicing concerns when necessary, even if it feels uncomfortable. Here are some tips to help you begin these difficult conversations with your healthcare provider:

- Prepare before your appointment by writing down your concerns, questions, side effects, symptoms, etc. on a piece of paper.
- Bring your observations and concerns to your next appointment - you may want to start your discussion with an issue that is most important to you.
- If you are uncomfortable talking to your healthcare provider, you may want to share your questions in writing or be accompanied by a loved one who you assign to ask questions.
- Bring a copy of the information (e.g., clinical trial, alternative treatment, side effect information) you would like to discuss with your care team to your appointment.
- Connect with others in the cancer community and learn about others' experiences with self-advocacy.
- Understand your rights regarding requesting a second opinion.

**CCC patient support can guide you and help you prepare for self-advocacy at your next appointment. Don't hesitate to reach out to our team at [support@colorectalcancer canada.com](mailto:support@colorectalcancer canada.com) to discuss further.**