

Guide to Communicating with Health Professionals

For Carers and Whānau

Talking to doctors, nurses, or specialists can feel overwhelming – especially if English isn't your first language, or if you're unsure of the medical system. This guide is here to help you feel more prepared, confident, and supported.

You have the right to understand what's happening and to have a say in your care.

Before the Appointment

- Write down your main questions or worries
- Bring a list of medications and symptoms
- Take a support person with you (family, friend, carer)
- Ask for an interpreter if English is not your first language
 - Let the clinic or hospital know ahead of time so they can arrange one

During the Appointment

- It's okay to ask: "Can you explain that more simply?"
- Repeat things back to check your understanding
- Ask about what to expect, side effects, or what to do at home
- Write down key points or ask the health worker to write them down for you

If English Is Not Your First Language

You have the right to a professional interpreter – not just a family member. Hospitals and most clinics provide this service for free.

You can ask:

"Can I have an interpreter who speaks Samoan / Tongan / Mandarin / Te Reo Māori?"

Advocacy and Support

If you don't feel heard or need help speaking up:

Contact a health advocate:

→ www.hdc.org.nz or call 0800 555 050 (free support service)

You have the right to ask for a second opinion or more time to make decisions

Being Culturally Safe Means

- Feeling respected and valued, no matter your background
- Being able to include your whānau, culture, and beliefs in decision-making
- Healthcare that adapts to you, not the other way around

You can say:

- "In our culture, we usually involve the whole family in health decisions."
- "Can I speak with someone who understands my cultural or spiritual needs?"

Final Tip

You're not being difficult by asking questions, you're being strong and informed. You know your body, your whānau, and your values best.