

# Teach-back: A quick guide



## Do your patients understand?

Studies show that up to 80% of information given to patients is forgotten immediately, and almost half the information retained is incorrect<sup>1,2</sup>

## What is teach-back?

Teach-back involves asking patients to explain back what you have just told them in their own words. Any misunderstandings are then clarified, and patient understanding is checked again. It is an effective way of checking you've explained information clearly and that your patient understands the actions they need to take.

### Step 1

Use plain language to explain information.

### Step 2

Ask the patient to explain what you just told them in their own words.

### Step 3

Re-explain anything that is misunderstood.

### Step 4

Repeat steps 2 & 3 until the information is understood.

Teach-back can improve knowledge retention, self-care and health outcomes,<sup>3,4</sup> and is endorsed by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care.

## How teach-back can be delivered



One-on-one or group sessions



Phone/telehealth



Giving verbal information



Demonstrating something



Using written or visual materials

## Tips for using teach-back

1. Summarise the 'must know' information into 2-3 points and just use teach-back on those.
2. Use **Chunk and Check** – deliver one point then check understanding before moving to the next point.
3. Keep your key points action-orientated so the patient can visualise what they must do and how they will do it.
4. The onus is on you to explain clearly – avoid language that makes the patient feel they are being tested.

## Example phrases for using teach-back

"It's important to keep using your inhaler. Can you just show me how you'll use it?"

"To check I've covered everything, could you explain what you'll do if you get breathless?"

For more info see: <http://teachback.org>