



Purple Playas Puffy's Pointers

Ages: 5 to 18 years



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Your Child's Body Guiding Your Child to a Medical Self-Advocate

Chronic illness is just that; chronic! You and your child may have little control over the disease your child is enduring, but there are a few things you can do that can give your child a sense of some control. It is important that you guide your child through medical decisions; but ultimately it is your child's body, and your child can become in-tune with it and advocate for his/her own medical needs.

When teaching your son or daughter to medically advocate for him/herself, you are teaching a skill that will empower him/her while transitioning into adulthood. Let's face it, at some point our children will not be so "little" anymore, and we need to send them into the next phase in their life with a voice and tools to be successful. This is especially true when your child has a life-long illness. Medical self-advocacy should begin early and you can start with these five simple tips.

- ♥ **Teach your child medical terms.** Your child needs to know the name of the illness(es), medications, procedures, therapies, treatments, types of medical professionals on his/her team, etc.
- ♥ **Teach your child to ask for needed information.** Prepare questions together, structure opportunities to practice what your child wants to discuss with the doctor, and debrief together.
- ♥ **Support your child in joining in the discussion.** This illness is about your child. Acknowledge your child's presence; use his/her name; invite your child into the conversation; and when appropriate, allow your child to lead the discussion. If needed, ask the doctor/nurse to talk directly to your child. It is your child's body.
- ♥ **Assist your child in understanding options and making meaningful choices.** Sometimes the illness and treatment can feel overwhelming for both you and your child. First, identify options, then make a pro/con list. This list can help your child with processing options and making a choice that is best for him/her.
- ♥ **Coach your child to challenge unfair or unjust treatment.** It is important that your son/daughter feels like his/her concerns are being heard and that there is mutual respect. If there are concerns, they should be voiced and problem solved.

A child is never too young to take some control and advocate for him/herself. The most successful young adult self-advocates are those who advocated and took control of their medical care at a young age.

Medical self-advocacy begins early.

We would love to hear how your child is using his/her voice. Visit us on Facebook: Purple Playas

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