



# ENGAGING PATIENTS WITH TYPE 2 DIABETES ABOUT COMMON COMORBIDITIES

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**Using the Teach Back Method**

# INTRODUCTION

As you are aware, the presence of comorbidities in patients with type 2 diabetes can make treatment more challenging. The degree of patient awareness and understanding of potential comorbidities may add to this complexity. Engaging and educating patients on an individual level about their specific diabetes-related comorbidities may help foster collaboration and adherence to treatment plans.<sup>1</sup> But as you can attest, not all patients will comprehend and/or retain the information provided.



# THE TEACH BACK METHOD

## Helping Patient Awareness and Recall

The teach back method is a communication technique that may assist in patient understanding and recall. It entails asking patients open-ended questions to explain or demonstrate the information you offer them regarding any aspects of their care such as diagnosis, recommendations, and treatments.<sup>2,3</sup>



Teach back is an opportunity for<sup>2</sup>:

1. You to provide appropriate medical guidance and information.
2. The patient to rephrase that guidance and information.
3. You to discern what patients heard and clarify to ensure your intended message was received.

## Using the Teach Back Method to Discuss Comorbidities Associated With Type 2 Diabetes

This method may help patients with type 2 diabetes better understand and adhere to the information and instructions. In fact, one study has shown that healthcare providers who employed elements of the teach back method were associated with improved patient glycemic control.<sup>4</sup>

Patient engagement discussion points and teach back prompts presented on the next two pages are offered as examples to help engage and inform patients on selected sample type 2 diabetes comorbidities. You can tailor your own discussion points and prompts as needed and for other potential complications associated with type 2 diabetes.

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*Elements of the teach back method have been associated with improved glycemic control.*  
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# ENGAGEMENT AND TEACH BACK EXAMPLES

| Engagement Discussion Point      | Sample Topics                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Teach Back Prompt <sup>2</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Stroke risk</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss and provide resources on stroke preventive strategies such as diet and exercise, smoking cessation, and medication.<sup>5</sup></li> <li>• Walk through the warning signs of stroke.<sup>5</sup></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please tell me in your own words what we discussed today regarding how to help prevent a stroke.</li> <li>• If your spouse asked what the warning signs for stroke are, what would you say?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Heart disease risk</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss and provide resources on the increased risk for heart disease resulting from hyperglycemia, uncontrolled hypertension, and/or dyslipidemia.<sup>6</sup></li> <li>• Remind patients that lifestyle modifications are fundamental to diabetes management and medications may be needed.<sup>6</sup></li> </ul>                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell me how not controlling blood sugar affects your heart?</li> <li>• Some people forget, so can you explain the lifestyle changes we talked about today and how you will take the medicine I am prescribing?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Obesity/weight management</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk about how weight gain and obesity pose a significant challenge to type 2 diabetes management and potential ways to help overcome that challenge.<sup>6</sup></li> <li>• Convey how obesity increases the risk of developing CVD comorbidities, such as hypertension and dyslipidemia, in addition to increasing insulin resistance.<sup>6</sup></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please tell me in your own words why losing weight is important and how you will start to lose weight even if it's just a little at a time.</li> <li>• To make sure we help avoid high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and potential insulin resistance, would you please explain what lifestyle changes we agreed to today?</li> </ul> |

# ENGAGEMENT AND TEACH BACK EXAMPLES (CONT'D)

| Engagement Discussion Point              | Sample Topics                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Teach Back Prompt <sup>2</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Chronic kidney disease (CKD)</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Let patients know that early diagnosis and treatment of CKD and adequate blood glucose control may help slow the progression of the disease.<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe to me how maintaining appropriate blood sugar may affect your kidneys.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Peripheral arterial disease (PAD)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Show patients how to perform daily foot, skin, and nail monitoring.<sup>8</sup></li> <li>Discuss the early signs of PAD and how following appropriate foot care can help reduce the risk for morbidity and disability.<sup>8</sup></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can you please show how you will check your feet, skin and nails?</li> <li>What will you do if you start to have leg pain, numbness or coldness in the lower legs or feet, or sores or infections on your feet or legs that heal slowly?</li> </ul> |

The teach back method goes beyond simply asking if they understand. Instead, having patients explain how well they understand instructions and how they will execute recommendations may result in more effective interactions that may promote better outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

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**References:** 1. Inzucchi SE, Bergenstal RM, Buse JB, et al. Management of hyperglycemia in type 2 diabetes: a patient-centered approach. Position statement of the American Diabetes Association (ADA) and the European Association for the Study of Diabetes (EASD). *Diabetes Care*. 2012;35:1364-1379. 2. Osborn CY, Cavanaugh K, Kripalani S. Strategies to address low health literacy and numeracy in diabetes. *Clin Diabetes*. 2010;28(4):171-175. 3. Weiss BD. *Health Literacy and Patient Safety: Help Patients Understand: A Manual for Clinicians*. American Medical Association Foundation and American Medical Association; 2007. 4. Schillinger D, Piette J, Grumbach K, et al. Closing the loop: physician communication with diabetic patients who have low health literacy. *Arch Intern Med*. 2013;163:83-90. 5. American Diabetes Association. Living with diabetes: stroke. <http://www.diabetes.org/living-with-diabetes/complications/stroke.html>. Updated December 10, 2013. Accessed June 30, 2016. 6. American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists. Management of common comorbidities of diabetes. <http://outpatient.aace.com/type-2-diabetes/management-of-common-comorbidities-of-diabetes>. Accessed June 30, 2016. 7. American Diabetes Association. Living with diabetes: kidney disease (nephropathy). <http://www.diabetes.org/living-with-diabetes/complications/kidney-disease-nephropathy.html>. Updated December 10, 2013. Accessed June 30, 2016. 8. American Diabetes Association. Standards of medical care in diabetes – 2014. *Diabetes Care*. 2014;37(S1):S14-S80.