

Healthcare Independence: It's a Process!



Learning to manage health needs and access health services is an important part of growing up. Identifying and practicing the skills needed to take on these tasks is often overlooked. Look for every day opportunities to practice these skills. Once they are on your radar screen, incorporating them is fairly easy.

Not sure where or how to start? These resources can help:



Check out the resources section of GotTransition.org. On this page there are tons of tools to help guide you through the six core elements of healthcare transition.



YEAHnh.org is a new website developed for young people ages 14-26 with chronic health conditions and disabilities. In the site's resources section under healthcare, you will find our Level Up tool to help you figure out where you are at and what information you will need to get where you want to be.

Think you're ready to jump in? Try these intermediate tools:

Fill out a checklist to assess current knowledge and to identify gaps in skills. There are several transition readiness assessments available online. GotTransition.org provides a tool for use by youth, and a companion tool for parents and caregiver. Try it. Do the responses match? It's a great conversation starter!



Helpful Tips:

After completing an assessment, think about the skill you want to address first.

Use natural occurrences, as much as possible.

Focus skills in one area at a time, in short periods of time.

Assist youth in taking on more responsibility over time.

The goal should be for youth to attain the highest level of independence possible and appropriate.

NHFV.org has a series of cards for youth, that were designed to assist in this process. Each card focuses on one area. Check out our *Level Up* card which helps assess where you are at right now. Then look at the *Take Control of Your Health Series*. In general, starting with the tools that cover concrete tasks, like managing appointments and medications, then moving on to more difficult concepts, such as managing health information and understanding health insurance, works best. These can be found at nhfv.org/projectsinitiatives/health-care-transition.



Managing Appointments

- Youth who have a 504 or IEP plans may already be practicing skills needed to plan for and participate in appointments. Have they been learning to speak up during meetings? Answer questions directly? Identify their goals?
- For youth who haven't been involved in 504 or IEP meetings, these may be new skills to practice. Many youth will have time alone with the provider during teen visits. Support youth to develop questions to ask the provider, and the ability to answer questions when asked.
- Model the process of making appointments. Have youth check in for the appointment. Request copies of the forms that are completed at check in ahead of time, so that the youth can practice filling them out.



Managing Medication

- The skills needed to manage medication, particularly those to take medication on time, are similar to those needed to do other time specific tasks.
- What tips and tricks work for the youth to get up on time? Turn assignments in on time? Are they transferable? Do they need to use an app or a reminder specific to medication?
- Model the process of getting a prescription; from ordering refills to picking them up. Engage youth to participate in setting up medication. Try a variety of pill boxes, routines, reminders to find what works best. Allow them to take on steps independently as appropriate.

Managing Health Information

Increasing independence in this area requires youth to learn about their own health, particularly if they have special health care needs. It will also require that they are able to answer health information questions about family health history.

- Use after visit summaries and care plans, if produced by the primary care practice, as teaching tools.
- Use workbooks, such as “Ready? Get Set. Go!” (available on www.nhfv.org).
- If the practice has a patient portal, encourage youth to become familiar with it. Access varies depending on age and guardianship issues, but portals can be an important tool for youth to manage health information.
- Request samples of “new patient forms” from the practice for youth to practice filling out, as these often ask questions about patient and family member health issues.

Managing Health Insurance

Learning about insurance and how to use it properly is an important skill and requires a lot of practice.

- Have youth carry a copy of their insurance card to reinforce the concept that insurance pays for visits, medication, etc.
- Review the summary of benefits document.
- Define key words such as “co-pay”, “deductible”.
- Teach key concepts, so that youth understand referrals, prior authorizations, and case management or care coordination.
- Parents and caregivers can have youth listen in to a call they place to the insurance company.

For more information about how to manage your medication or to help someone you know become more independent managing their healthcare contact us.



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