

Clinician Guide to Patient Conversations on Brain Health



Talking About Brain Health

Talking about cognition can be challenging. Patients often assume that any discussion around brain health means that there is something wrong. Clinicians can help patients reframe their thinking around cognitive health.

For Healthy Patients

“Just like you get regular blood tests, we are going to start monitoring your cognitive health. By doing this, we will be able to determine what your normal is, and then we can more easily track if something does change down the line. This will allow us to take action earlier and improve the outcome.”

For Patients With Concerns or a Diagnosis

“Since you have [this concern/diagnosis/treatment plan], we are going to start measuring your cognitive function with regular testing. This will make it easier to make sure we have the correct diagnosis, then determine if your treatment is working or if we need to make any changes. The goal is to keep an eye on things so we can be sure you’re performing at your best.”

Talking About Cognitive Assessments

Patients may still be nervous about taking a cognitive assessment, even with a clear understanding of why evaluating their brain health is important. To help alleviate any anxiety, be sure to explain the entire process to them so they know what to expect.

Pre-Assessment

Explain the value: Remind patients why they are taking a cognitive assessment and how the results will be valuable.

What they can expect: Go through all the details: time, location, how long it will take, how results will be delivered, etc.

What they will learn: Give them some insight on what the test will be able to tell them.

Post-Assessment

What the results mean: Take the time to go through their results and explain what they mean. Let them know that “average” is perfectly fine and that expectations about baseline scores and changes over time will depend on their specific goals and outcomes.

What’s next: Based on the results, explain what will happen next. This could be a referral to a specialist, a change in treatment, or simply setting up a future reevaluation.

Remember: Talking about these topics can be scary for patients. Be sure to always explain terminology, keep the tone positive, and emphasize the benefits of completing the assessment.

Dig deeper into patient conversations around cognition with the full e-book:
How to Talk About Cognitive Health With Patients: A Guide to Broaching Sensitive Topics

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