

# Using the Teach-Back Method to Improve Patient Understanding

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Approximately 40% to 80% of health information that patients hear is immediately forgotten, and almost half of the retained information is incorrect.<sup>1-3</sup> To address this, the teach-back method, also known as “closing the loop,” is an evidence-based communication technique that can be used by any member of the health care team.<sup>4,5</sup> When implemented alongside other patient-centered approaches, such as **motivational interviewing** and **shared decision making**, teach-back can greatly enhance patient understanding.



The method is simple and efficient. After conveying information, the provider asks the patient to put into their own words what they have understood or to demonstrate what they will do.<sup>6</sup> This exercise identifies any misunderstandings, reinforces the information, and provides an opportunity to modify and re-teach as necessary.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 1. Teach-Back Method Steps**

<p><b>Explain</b></p>	<p>Present the information clearly and simply, starting with the most important points.</p> <p><i>Example:</i> “Take two amlodipine tablets in the morning for the next 14 days until you use up your current supply. After that, start your new dose: one tablet daily in the morning.”</p>
<p><b>Ask</b></p>	<p>Invite the patient to explain it back to you in their own words.</p> <p><i>Example:</i> “So that I can be sure I did a good job of explaining how to take the medication, can you tell me in your own words how you plan to take it?”</p>
<p><b>Clarify</b></p>	<p>Address any misunderstandings or gaps in knowledge.</p> <p><i>Example:</i> “I may not have done a good job of explaining. Let me try again using a calendar to mark the days when you will take one tablet or two tablets.”</p>
<p><b>Ask</b></p>	<p>If clarification is necessary, ask the patient to explain it again in their own words.</p> <p><i>Example:</i> “I hope I explained it better that time. Can you tell me again how you plan to take your amlodipine?”</p>
<p><b>Reinforce</b></p>	<p>Summarize key points and confirm understanding.</p> <p><i>Example:</i> “That’s right! Take two amlodipine tablets in the morning for the next 14 days until you use up your current supply. After that...”</p>

For more information, access Cardi-OH’s expanded resource on **shared decision making**.

**References**

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