

The Empowered Consumer: Communication in the Hospital

Even the most informed parents may find an unfamiliar medical setting intimidating. Some people report “freezing up” when faced with a decision or being pressured by care providers.

Here are some suggestions for communication in the hospital.

Practice, Practice, Practice: Make a plan about communicating and collaborating in the birth room, and **practice** by role-playing with your doula and birth partner. *There are many ways to say, “No, thank you,” respectfully and politely.* **Practice** saying “No,” “What other options are there?” and “Please give us some time to discuss and decide,” in a way that feels good to you and your partner. **Practice** what you and your partner will say in different possible scenarios. Remember, the birth partner who is empowered to use his or her voice can be an incredibly advocate for the birthing woman.

Bring gifts & humanize everyone: Immediately set up a rapport with your care team with a basket of cookies or chocolates. Make a human connection with every person who enters the room. Make it clear that you are informed, engaged, on the same team, that you give respect and expect it.

Try these:

No, thank you! *(Say this in every possible combination there is!)*

Thank you. Could my partner and I have a minute or two alone to discuss our options?

I promise I’m not trying to make your job difficult, but is there any way we could ____?

Thank you so much! We just need a little bit of time to talk.

Thanks again for your help – we are happy to sign a waiver that we’ve declined that procedure.

My wife really needs some help right now. Can you help us?

My partner is scared and I don’t want her to be upset. What can we do?

If the situation is becoming urgent, or you are not being heard:

I’d like to see that policy in writing.

I do not consent. / She does not consent. Please do not touch me/her. *(Only the laboring woman has the right to accept to or refuse treatment, but the partner may help by affirming her wishes.)*

Please contact the patient advocate/liaison/chaplain and have him/her join us for this conversation.

Please document in the medical record that you intend to force me/my partner to have an intervention I have/she has declined. Please notify your legal department of this immediately.

Cut and tape to
back of partner’s
driver’s license or
cell phone



U Is this Urgent, or is there time to talk?

B What are the benefits?

R What are the risks?

A What are the alternatives?

N What if we do nothing?

D Discuss and decide.