7 STEPS TO BECOMING AN EMPOWERED PATIENT

YOU have the power to improve your life.

Mended Hearts®

1 TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

You are responsible for your healthcare and your recovery. We all make wrong choices at times, so don't be afraid if you feel you need to make changes to your treatment plan. Consult your healthcare team and make it happen. Also, keep yourself informed. New information and new treatment options become available all the time, and it helps to learn about them for the future.

2 EDUCATE YOURSELF

Learning about your heart condition is the first step on your road to recovery and improving your heart health. Educate yourself so you understand your diagnosis and what it means. Ask your doctor or another member of your healthcare team to explain your condition. Don't be afraid to ask questions and keep asking until you fully understand.

3 KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

You have the right to be treated as part of the team, to ask questions and get answers, to be heard, to have easy access to notes and medical records, to get a second opinion (and third and fourth), to suggest alternatives, to feel confident in the team, to change your mind, and to appeal decisions if you don't agree. Know your rights and insist that they are respected.

4 BE PART OF THE TEAM

Patients often feel they aren't a valuable part of their healthcare team because they don't have a medical degree, but that's not the case. You know yourself—your lifestyle, your needs, your preferences, and what is important to you—better than anyone else on your team! Don't be afraid to ask as many questions as you need to and to adjust any recommendations that don't feel right for you. Your healthcare providers want your participation.

5 GET INFORMATION

If you have recently been hospitalized or had surgery, a medical procedure or testing, you can never ask too many questions. Be sure to get all of the information you need about recovery. Ask about recovery time, medication side effects, what life looks like after recovery, foods to eat and avoid, activity level, restrictions, signs and symptoms that might trigger a call to the doctor or 911, and any other question you have about recovery.

6 VOICE YOUR OPINION

Your voice matters. Your story matters. If you are uncomfortable with something, speak up and ask for a solution. Be kind and considerate in your requests, but don't be afraid to share your concerns, suggestions, feelings and needs with your healthcare team. Some patients are afraid that they will be labeled as a "trouble patient," but the reality is most doctors and nurses value your opinion and want you to let them know.

7 MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS THAT ARE RIGHT FOR YOU

You are the person who has to live with decisions you make—not your doctor, nurse, surgeon, or other members of your healthcare team, so it's important to make decisions that are right for you. Shared decision-making means that there is ongoing communication between the patient and the person providing care. Through this communication, the patient and health care provider together can decide on treatment.

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