



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Communications Assistance Resources for Patients and Visitors with Hearing Loss or Limited English Proficiency

UPMC is committed to giving the best care possible to patients who are deaf, hard of hearing, or who speak limited English, making sure that all patients and visitors have equal access to health care.

What should a patient with a disability do when going to a UPMC hospital to make sure their needs are met?

- Tell hospital staff about communication assistance needs, such as interpreters.
- Label personal items or assistive devices with the patient's name and contact information.
- Make sure someone can take care of any service animal brought into the hospital.

What type of communication assistance is available at UPMC hospitals?

- American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters
- Oral interpreters
- Foreign language interpreters
- Tactile interpreters for those who are Deaf-Blind
- iPad with video relay service (VRS) and other communication apps
- Video relay interpreting services (VRI)
- Teletype (TTY) phones
- Communication cards/boards
- Telephone handset amplifiers
- Assistive listening toolkits (TTY phone, phone signaler, door knocker, personal amplification device, and sound signaler)

Can I use a family member or a friend as an interpreter?

- Family and friends should not be used as interpreters.
- Family and friends may be unreliable as interpreters because they tend to be too emotionally involved and may not have the medical training needed to accurately interpret the conversation.
- Using your family member or friend raises confidentiality and HIPAA concerns.
- A better choice would be to have your family member or friend there for the conversation with a qualified interpreter. Interpretation is provided to patients at no cost.

Do patients and visitors pay for communication assistance?

No. The facility or health care provider gives communication assistance free of charge.

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When do I ask for communication assistance?

Ask when scheduling hospital stays or appointments (as well as follow-up appointments).

- **Hospital Admissions**
 - Tell the admissions staff when scheduling your stay.
 - Ask for help when you come to the hospital.
 - If you are in the hospital, ask your nurse. If they cannot help you, [contact Patient Relations](#).
- **Surgical Scheduling**
 - Tell your surgeon and the surgery scheduler.
- **Office Visits**
 - Tell the scheduler or receptionist and your health care provider.
 - Check with your health care team a few days before your appointment to make sure an interpreter or other communication assistance has been scheduled, if needed.

What else can I do to make sure I get the help that I need?

Tell staff right away if you feel that your communication needs are not being met, and ask for other help.

- **Accommodation Card**
 - If you have hearing loss, [make a HealthBridges Accommodation Card by clicking here](#). Complete and print the card so you can give it to your health care team in case you can't communicate due to your medical issue.
- **MyUPMC**
 - MyUPMC is an electronic portal to help you communicate with your doctor's office and access your medical records through your computer or tablet. Visit MyUPMC at www.myupmc.com.

Who do I ask or go to if I have questions or concerns?

- Ask your health care team
 - Nurse or unit director
 - Patient Relations
 - Social worker
 - Case manager
 - Your doctor
 - Other health care providers based on your health issue
 - [The Patient Relations Department](#)
 - The Disabilities Resource Center at 412-605-1483 or disabilitiesresource@upmc.edu
- Make sure you know who you are asking for help. Not all UPMC employees who are wearing medical scrubs or a uniform are the right people to help you.
- [Click here to view a video about accessible health care at UPMC.](#)



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Can I bring my assistive technology device or service animal to the hospital with me?

- Yes. Put your name and contact information on your assistive devices. You are responsible for these items and assume all risk connected to them.
- Service animals are allowed unless the animal is not under control and the owner/handler does not take strong, useful action to control it. All service animals must be housebroken.
- If bringing a service animal, arrange for someone to feed, water, and toilet the animal during your stay

What if my family member or visitor needs an accommodation related to a disability?

If an accommodation is needed to give equal access to public services or to take part in a health care experience, reasonable accommodations will be given at no cost. These may include a sign language interpreter, help with navigation, large print materials, and so on.

How can I stop getting automated appointment reminders by phone?

Tell the front desk staff if you do not want to get automated messages from AudioCare. MyUPMC is a great way to communicate with your doctor's office about appointments, prescriptions, and test results. [Click here to learn more about MyUPMC.com.](#)