



My Next Patient has a Learning Disability

Key Messages

Caring for the patient



What you should always do

- Actively listen to the patient using verbal and non verbal communication skills.
- Involve the patient in all aspects of their care.
- Make reasonable adjustments in the way we work and to the care environment.

What you should think about

- Does the patient understand their health needs?
- How can the patient's knowledge and experience help in their care?
- Does the patient need someone to support them during procedures?

What you should never do

- Don't assume the patient can't understand because of their learning disability.
- Don't assume that everything is linked to the patient's learning disability.
- Don't give the patient too much information in one go.



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“It is really important the nurse gets to know me and how I communicate!”

As a nurse or other health professional, hospitals are part of your everyday working life. For many people with a learning disability, hospitals are frightening places and it can be hard for people to speak up because they are too ill and not feeling confident.

To help you care for the patient, involve carers and others in the patient's care, you can:

- Speak to the patient and people who know them well to find out about them
- Check how the patient communicates when they are feeling well and when ill
- Check if the patient has an advocate (or needs one) to help them speak up
- Provide information for the patient, using signs, symbols, pictures, and clear words
- Talk to the patient even if you are not sure how much they can understand you
- Check if the patient wants someone to support them during procedures
- Check the Mental Capacity Act for information regarding capacity to consent
- Make reasonable adjustments, to support the patient through the care process