

## Frequently Asked Questions Education & Outreach

### **What is the mission of 15-40 Connection?**

To improve cancer survival rates by teaching people how to detect it early. Early diagnosis is the best medicine for cancer. Our 3 Steps Detect program teaches people to recognize early warning signs of cancer and how to work with doctors to accelerate the process that leads to diagnosis and to receive the most effective care.

### **How is 15-40 Connection different from other organizations?**

15-40 Connection focuses on the path that leads to diagnosis. To detect cancer early, patients play a critically important role and 15-40 Connection teaches and empowers people to do this. Reducing delays in diagnosis and diagnosing cancer early can greatly increase your chances of survival. It's an advantage we want everybody to have.

### **Why is this education important?**

Nearly 40% of the US population will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime (that's 10 out of every 25 people). As the World Health Organization stated succinctly in its 2017 Guide to Early Cancer Diagnosis *"Early diagnosis improves cancer outcomes by providing the greatest likelihood of successful treatment, at lower cost and with less complex interventions."*

### **How can I get involved?**

Your voice has power. You can help teach people how to detect cancer early. Share 15-40 Connection's [3 Steps Detect](#). If you're a teacher or wellness professional, ask us about our train the trainer program. Connect us to your school or organization. Donate to 15-40 Connection or hold a fundraiser. Funds raised will help us teach others and develop additional education tools. If you have had cancer, [share your story](#) so people can learn from your experience.

### **How can I bring 15-40 Connection education to my high school, university or workplace?**

[Contact us](#), Tell us about your organization and we can determine the best way to bring 15-40 Connection to your school or workplace.

## Frequently Asked Questions 3 Steps Detect

### **My health change has lasted for 2 weeks but it doesn't seem like a big deal and I can still get through my day. Can I wait a few more weeks?**

While it's common to be unsure about whether or not to call your doctor, it is time to call after 2 weeks of a health change. Feeling bad or "just not yourself" for 2 weeks or more is a sign that you need to make an appointment. You can start by calling the office and talking to the nurse or other member of the healthcare team or emailing your doctor. Explain your health change(s), how long it has persisted, any self-care that you have tried and how it helped or not. They will be able to offer suggestions about your best next step and tell you if you need to come in to the office.

### **My doctor diagnosed me. When should I feel better?**

This is a great question to ask your doctor after you are prescribed a treatment plan. Ask, when should you feel better and what should you do if you don't. Staying in touch if you don't feel better is important. Sometimes, a treatment plan is not effective and you may need a different treatment.

### **My doctor diagnosed my problem but I still don't feel better. How long should I wait?**

The answer can vary depending on your diagnosis and treatment. Call your doctor's office and explain your situation and ask if you should be feeling better. It may be time for a return visit. If the answer is "not yet", ask when you should start feeling better and what should you do if you don't.

### **I have a doctor appointment coming up. How should I prepare?**

Make notes – on paper or in your phone - and bring them to your appointment.

- Your medical history (i.e., past and current disease, injury, treatment)
- Prescriptions and over-the-counter medications (including vitamins and supplements) that you take.
- The top three concerns you want addressed.
- For specific health changes, note when you first noticed it, what you were doing immediately before that, how is it unusual for you, any self-care you have tried (i.e. over the counter medicines) and how much it helped.

Then practice telling your story to your doctor.

### **I know very little about medicine and health care, how should I describe how I feel?**

Not knowing medical terms is fine and expected. The best way to describe how you feel is to use your own words and do your best to describe what feels different and why it doesn't seem right. If your doctor doesn't understand what you mean or wants more clarification, s/he will ask you questions. Your

words are the best words. Only the people who went to medical school are expected to know medical lingo.

**The health changes I am feeling are embarrassing and hard to talk about. Do I need to bring them up?**

If you feel nervous or embarrassed to talk to your doctor – you’re not alone! It’s common. Keep in mind, your doctor has many other patients and what is embarrassing to you is very likely something your doctor has helped others with before. It’s hard to imagine but your super embarrassing symptom is probably no big deal to your doctor. Not bringing it up only hurts you. Doctors can’t feel what you are feeling. If you don’t speak up, it is very hard for them to help you.

**My doctor doesn’t seem to listen or understand me. S/he is the medical expert, how important is my input?**

The short answer is very important.

Good health care requires a team – your doctor and you. Your doctor brings medical expertise to the team and you bring information about you; what is normal for your health and ways your health has changed. When you work together, you get best care. Without good communication and understanding, delays in diagnosis occur. Keep in mind, most doctors are well intentioned and want to provide good care. In today’s health care environment though, they’re rushed and often have less than 15 minutes to spend with you. While that means you should be prepared, it does not mean you should settle for a doctor who does not listen. It may be time to find a new doctor.

**My doctor gave me a diagnosis but it doesn’t seem right to me. What should I do?**

Trust your instincts and share your concern with your doctor. Many people see physicians as authority figures and find it hard to share concerns like these or to say “I don’t agree” or “I don’t feel that you are hearing me.” Open, honest and respectful collaboration is the key to good health care so share your concerns.

**Should I find a new doctor?**

Doctors can be under a lot of pressure to see too many people in too little time. But if yours doesn’t let you ask questions, share in decision-making, or participate in your care, it’s time to look for a doctor who does.

**Frequently Asked Questions**  
**Step 3 – Share with your doctor**

**My doctor told me I would be called to schedule another appointment. I never heard from anyone. Does that mean I don't need the appointment anymore?**

Not hearing from your doctor does not mean you don't need the appointment. On the contrary, you may have simply slipped through the cracks in their system. Call your doctor and follow up on appointments, referrals and test results.

**I want to learn more about my diagnosis. Where is the best place to find reliable medical info online?**

ADD NLM but can we include others? Explain not all web sites are reliable – some are selling products but its not obvious or some a giving advice with little expertise or evidence to support

**My doctor diagnosed me and gave me treatment plan. Should I ask any questions?**

Yes, be sure to ask when you should be feeling better or when your symptoms should be gone. Then ask what you should do if you don't feel better in that timeframe.

**My doctor told me to come back in six months but I am feeling worse now. Should I still wait the six months?**

If you still don't feel well or feel worse, call your doctor and let him/her know. To provide you with the best care s/he needs to hear from. In order to help you, your doctor may need you to come in sooner.

## Frequently Asked Questions Media & Advocates

### **What is the mission of 15-40 Connection?**

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### **How is 15-40 Connection different from other organizations?**

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### **Why is this education important?**

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### **What is the impact of the education?**

Delayed diagnosis is preventable. Healthcare is a team sport and patient participation is critical. Our education empowers the patient to support early diagnosis.

We don't talk about cancer the same way we talk about other diseases. When we do, it saves lives. Just as death rates fell dramatically when the medical community identified smoking, high cholesterol and high blood pressure as risk factors, a new conversation about how to recognize the early warning signs of cancer can cause life-saving changes.

Increased awareness saves lives. Since increased awareness of the risk factors for heart disease and stroke by physicians—and increased awareness of symptoms by the public—death rates from cardiovascular diseases have fallen by almost 50 percent, while death rates from stroke have fallen by 60 percent since 1970\*\*

Delayed diagnosis is preventable. Since 1975, improvements in cancer survival rates for 15 to 40 year-olds have continuously lagged behind all other age groups. Delayed diagnosis is a major culprit of this shocking statistic.