

Pain - Communication and the Patient Experience

Communication Matters: Emotional Pain

Doctor:

The good news is that now that we know what's been causing all of your pain and discomfort we can begin to treat it. You can still go to school and hang out with your friends, and do many of the activities that you did before.

Mother:

Scott - stop drawing and pay attention.

Scott:

Sorry.

Doctor:

However, you may need to take certain precautions or rearrange your schedule if you're not feeling well or if you're too tired. Simple dietary changes, such as avoiding trigger foods; eating a high calorie, high protein diet even if you don't feel like it - those are the first lines of defence for IBD [Irritable Bowel Disease]. Your symptoms may disappear for a while, but you never know when they're going to become a problem. If you're prepared and take care of yourself, these symptoms won't limit your life.

We can arrange to get you a priority toilet card for school and for travelling, but it is important that you be prepared. Carry a backpack with toilet paper, powder, a can of air freshener, disposable gloves, large freezer bags, clean underwear, and a change of clothes. We'll be starting you on a step-up approach to medication, which means we'll start with milder drugs first that hopefully control the inflammation. Besides this medication you'll also need: an anti-diarrheal medication, perhaps a pain reliever, iron supplements, vitamin B12 shots, calcium, and vitamin D supplements. If these don't work we may need to consider surgery. This means removing the entire colon and rectum, and in cases where we can't construct a pouch from the end of your small intestine, we'll create a permanent opening in your abdomen where stool is passed and collected in a bag.

I asked your mom to step out because I wanted to talk to you about intimacy. It's natural to be worried that this disease might affect your sexual relationships. You may feel this is a little too personal or too embarrassing to talk to me about, but I hope over time you know that you can talk to me about any or all of these issues. You may be wondering if sex will be painful?

What if I smell? Will my medications affect my sex drive? There are a few things you can do to make intimacy go more smoothly. If you need a suppository at night, insert it after sexual intercourse. Use a lubricating jelly if you experience pain or discomfort during sex. And intimacy doesn't always mean sexual intercourse. Kissing and cuddling can bring pleasure as well. And talk to your partner.

Scott? You seem a little distracted - are you okay?

Scott:

Yeah.

Doctor:

I suppose this is a lot for you to absorb. Look your mom is setting up the next follow-up appointment with the receptionist - do you want to ask any questions before you go?

Scott:

No.