



# TELLING YOUR MEDICAL STORY

## FACTS, DATA & PATTERNS

*For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost ... (Luke 14:28 ESV)*

### WHAT IS A MEDICAL STORY?

We long to be heard and validated. Telling our story connects us with others, but our personal story is different from our medical story.

Healthcare professionals can see up to 20 patients a day, which means they listen to 20 stories every day, tracking data points to develop the best possible treatment plan for each patient. Sometimes, tracking those data points can feel cold, sterile, and unconnected.

Chronic illness, mental illness, chronic pain, and disability can impact every facet of our lives, and we long for our medical teams to understand that impact on our daily lives. Yet one of their primary roles is to build a bridge between the treatment plans we need and the insurance company that pays for them.

### LEARN TO TELL A DIFFERENT STORY

The story our doctors need to hear from us is based on facts and data, identifying the length and severity of our symptoms, noting patterns, anomalies, dates, medications, treatment plans, and brief notes.

### SPREADSHEETS ARE VALUABLE STORY TOOLS

Include columns for:

- ▶ **Dates**
- ▶ **Symptoms and Treatments** (medication, massage, heat, cold, physical therapy, wraps, or movement). Keep notes brief.
- ▶ **Develop a consistent shorthand.** Watch for patterns and anomalies. Include days off work, cancelled social plans, and when a treatment for one symptom caused or worsened another.
- ▶ **Severity of Symptoms** - Rating scales are meant to be objective, but severity is subjective. Make your best guess. In time, you'll become adept.

Draw a line at the end of each month. Count the number of days you experienced symptoms, were unable to work, or had to cancel social plans. These "totals" are data points your medical professionals need to prescribe the best possible treatment plan for you. Data is a fundamental piece of your medical story.

Visit [chronic-joy.org](http://chronic-joy.org) for more resources.



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## MEDICAL STORY QUICK-REFERENCE SPREADSHEET

A spreadsheet listing your medications, healthcare professionals' names, addresses, phone and fax numbers, and your full name and date of birth is a quick reference for you and a key component of your medical story. This spreadsheet can be easily scanned and added to your chart, which is especially helpful for dentists and eye doctors.

Columns to include:

- ▶ **Names of All Medications and Supplements**
- ▶ **Dosage**
  - Medications: dosage/strength/how it's prescribed
  - Prescribing doctor
  - Prescription renewal dates (date of prior authorization)
  - Supplements: dosage/strength/if prescribed, by whom
- ▶ **Healthcare Professionals' addresses, phone and fax numbers, and date last seen**
- ▶ **Additional Facts**
  - Date of last period and mammogram (if applicable)
  - Dates and names of tests, surgeries, procedures, and hospitalizations, including doctor, name of hospital or testing site, and outcome
  - Medication allergies/reactions

### BEFORE YOUR APPOINTMENT: REVIEWING DATA

- ▶ Review and update your medication list.
- ▶ Review dates of office visits, tests, procedures, and hospitalizations.
- ▶ Review symptoms. Note severity or impact and any patterns.
- ▶ Using a Post-It note, make a list of the things you want to discuss with your doctor. Star the three most important points.

### AT THE APPOINTMENT: SHARING YOUR MEDICAL STORY

Being prepared ensures that you have time to talk with your doctor about how your illness, pain, or disability is impacting your daily life. Personal details here flesh out your medical story.

### MEDICAL STORIES EQUIP HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

Your medical story helps facilitate the best possible treatment plan for you. Keeping a current, well-maintained log helps you effectively communicate your medical story to your doctor, equipping him or her with the facts, data, and patterns necessary to build an effective treatment plan, and a bridge between you and the insurance company.

Visit [chronic-joy.org/story-matters](http://chronic-joy.org/story-matters) for a free, printable Medical Story log.

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