

## How to describe your symptoms to health professionals

It is important to give your medical professionals a clear description of your concerns and symptoms, so they can make the right diagnosis and develop the best treatment plan for you.

### Use your own words

You don't need to use medical jargon to be understood. Describe how you feel in your own words, taking care to provide your health practitioner with the answers to the following questions:

- What area of the body is impacted (if physical)?
- When and where did it become a problem?
- How severe is it?
- How frequently does it occur?
- What does it look like (e.g. flushed, red, bruised, swollen)?
- How much movement do you have?
- Do you have any self-monitored data available (e.g. temperature, pulse, blood pressure, blood glucose, peak expiratory flow rate, and oxygen saturation)?
- Have you observed any patterns or links (e.g. associations with certain activities, specific injuries, times of day, food or drink)?
- Do you have any prior or family history of similar or related issues?
- Do you have any current medications?
- Have you recently changed medications?
- What does the pain feel like? (see guidance below)

### Describe your pain

Explain your pain as simply, clearly and specifically as possible. Consider your answers to the following questions:

- How long you have had your pain?
- Where you feel the pain?
- Is your pain in one spot or spread out?
- How does the pain feel (e.g. ache, cramp, heavy, hot/burning, sharp, shooting, stabbing, throbbing, tender, exhausting) and how severe is it?
- Is the pain constant or does it come and go?
- What activities make pain worse or better?
- How does your pain limit what you can do?
- How often does the pain occur and how long does it last?
- Is there anything that triggers the pain?

Providing a detailed description of your symptoms will help your health professional identify and treat the problem.