

“Let's listen to each other”

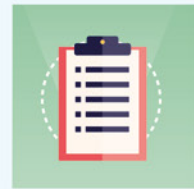
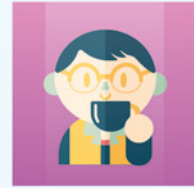
The Organisation for Respiratory Health in Finland's programme for patient skills and good care

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 **Hengitysliitto**

Contents

Human encounters	3
1. Interaction increases satisfaction	4
PRACTICE 1:	5
2. Listen more	6
PRACTICE 2:	6
3. Your treatment starts with you	7
PRACTICE 3:	8
4. Prepare for your appointments	12
PRACTICE 4:	13
5. Remote interaction emphasises trust	15
6. Health has a price	16
PRACTICE 5:	16
Sources	17



Human encounters

We humans want to be seen and heard. In order to take care of our own health, we need to understand what good care and self-care are all about. A good relationship with healthcare professionals supports the success of treatment. We dare to ask and we have the ability to talk about our health. This enables us to influence the decisions affecting us and our quality of life. Interaction can lead to better health since it increases our motivation and commitment to the treatment.

Effective interaction is a two-way street. The target audience of the *In good care* programme are the people affected with a medical condition. In this handbook, we give tips for successful encounters in health care. Some tips are particularly suitable for people with medical conditions, some are suitable for your loved ones and some for healthcare professionals.

The Organisation for Respiratory Health in Finland promotes respiratory health and good life for people suffering from respiratory diseases. One in five

Finns suffers from a respiratory disorder at some point of their life or has been diagnosed with a respiratory disease. There's a lot of work to be done. We have summarised the basics of good care into 5 practices that can be adopted by both the patient and the healthcare professional. The handbook also includes greetings to decision-makers, since receiving good care is one of the ways the welfare state is apparent in the everyday life of citizens and in the equality of healthcare services. Good care is effective and impactful and it empowers those suffering from a medical condition. Good care saves resources, since it reduces the need for follow-up examinations and treatment.

This handbook was inspired by the Swedish Riksförbundet HjärtLung's campaign *Sedd i vården*. The core idea of the campaign is to make the patient a visible participant in their own care instead of just a being the target of treatment.

We all need and deserve good care. We can influence what kind of treatment we receive. Let's do our best together!



1. Interaction increases satisfaction

Studies have shown that good interaction improves both treatment outcomes and the satisfaction of all parties involved. Positive interaction promotes trust and appreciation between all parties. For a person suffering from a medical condition, it is easier to deal with sensitive and personal issues in a warm and confidential atmosphere that ensures patients do not have to fear being ignored. Sometimes a person can misinterpret a general comment by a healthcare professional as criticism, particularly if the subject is sensitive.

Fears and other difficult emotions brought on by medical conditions are also easier to face in a positive, hope-fostering atmosphere. Patients may also be offended if they are treated hurriedly or with indifference, or if they are made to feel that they brought their condition on themselves.

When treatment-related matters are decided on, a healthcare professional can make suggestions and give instructions and recommendations to the patient. In different situations, different means are needed, but the implementation of each means in practice can be supported by constructive interaction.

It is only human that knowing what is good for you does not always lead to changes in attitudes or behaviour. Successful interaction motivates persons with medical conditions to take care of themselves and helps them in putting theory into practice.

The reactions of patients also affect the job satisfaction of healthcare professionals and their desire to continue working in the field. The more we dare to be present as human beings in different situations, the more our emotions are car-

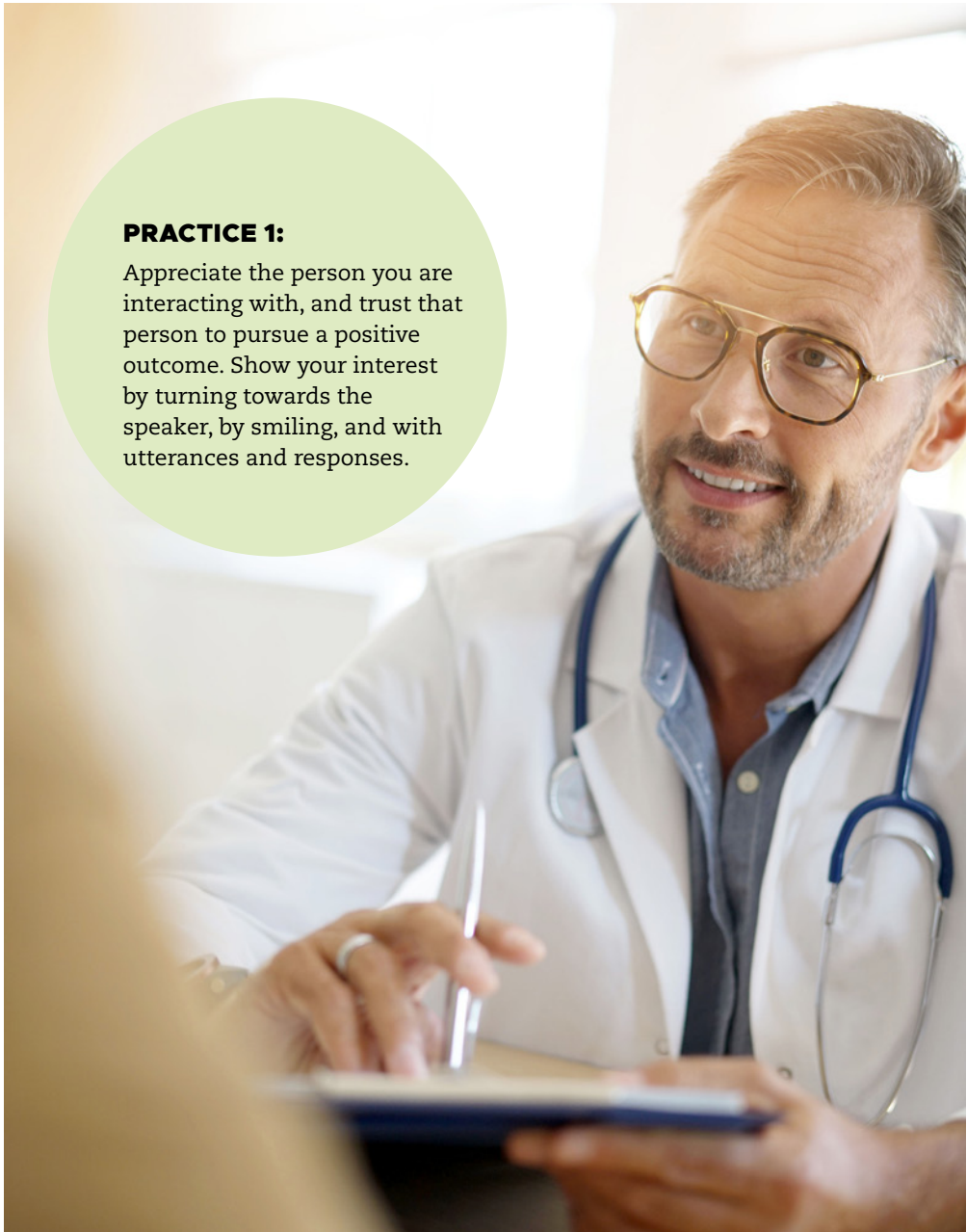
ried over to others. Positivity increases positivity and, correspondingly, negative or pessimistic attitudes lead to rejection. Therefore, successful interaction also increases the satisfaction of healthcare professionals.

In interactive situations, our emotions can be influenced by a wide range of things:

- » our previous experiences from similar situations
- » events that preceded the interaction
- » our own emotions, hopes and expectations
- » expressions and gestures of the people present
- » language and tone of the people present
- » the appearance, gender, nationality, clothes, etc. of the people present

If you have a medical condition: Nurture successful interaction. Think positively of the person you are talking with and of yourself, interpret things with a positive mindset. Be aware of your own active role and your responsibility in influencing your own care and its planning. Take notes.

If you are a healthcare professional: Nurture successful interaction. Think positively of the person you are talking with and of yourself, interpret things with a positive mindset. As a professional, you have authority. Being empathetic and seeing the patient as a person instead of just focusing on their condition is important for a successful interaction. The way you communicate can provide your patient energy, trust, information, hope and insight.



PRACTICE 1:

Appreciate the person you are interacting with, and trust that person to pursue a positive outcome. Show your interest by turning towards the speaker, by smiling, and with utterances and responses.



WATCH:

The Organisation for Respiratory Health in Finland has 4 videos on its YouTube channel that illustrate the impact of different interaction styles on the outcome of an appointment. The same information is conveyed in all situations, but the participant's level of motivation, commitment and satisfaction with the appointment vary, both for the healthcare professional and the person with a medical condition.

Interaction matters – in good care!

2. Listen more

A person with a medical condition is the expert in their own health. It is important that you discuss your health and the issues relating to your condition and self-care with a professional during health-care appointments.

Patients who are committed to their treatment are more likely to improve their health than patients who outsource their treatment to professionals. Patients' ability to understand the given instructions on treatment may vary depending on, for example, their age, other possible medical conditions, native language and educational background. The ability to absorb information can also vary from person to person depending on their life situations and the stage of their chronic disease.

Good interaction requires the will to understand the other person and also the courage to ask if you are not familiar with an expression used by the other person, for example. Different linguistic backgrounds and dialects, acronyms and jargon sometimes produce unintended misunderstandings. Sometimes it is also important to hear the person behind the words and focus on observing the things and emotions that the other person is really trying to convey.

In successful interaction, attention is paid not only to the medical condition, but also to its impact on the patient's life

and managing everyday life. What is the extent of the medical condition's effects, and what can good therapeutic control enable?

The time allotted for appointments is often limited, so the conversation may be left unfinished. Some questions may go unanswered or there might even not be enough time to ask them (see Chapter 4). At its best, peer support can be used as a tool to process the thoughts, experiences and emotions that manifest during appointments. A peer has gone through similar experiences and survived them. Peer support can be free-form or provided in an organised manner by associations and authorities locally or online nationally.

If you have a medical condition: Listen, listen, listen. Ask specific questions. Be honest with your answers. Answer based on your everyday experiences rather than based on what you think is the right or desired answer.

If you are a healthcare professional: Listen, listen, listen. Use simple language, explain foreign words and abbreviations. Be careful when you make assumptions about the everyday life of your patients. Ask specific questions.



More information on the peer support services provided by the Organisation for Respiratory Health in Finland and its member organisations can be found at:
www.hengitysliitto.fi

PRACTICE 2:

Well-instructed self-care is reflected in improved quality of life and reduced healthcare visits.

3. Your treatment starts with you

In good care, your treatment starts with you. You make active decisions and choices to promote your own health, so you also need to know the objectives of your care. Once you understand all the things that affect your health, you can increase the quality of life with your actions.

You need the ability to receive information and an understanding on how you can apply it in practice. In addition, you must be able to act independently. For your part, you are responsible for the success of your own treatment. At best, you do not need to seek treatment several times to hear the same instructions for the same condition. This of course does not apply to follow-up appointments for chronic conditions, which are required for ensuring good care.

Talk to your healthcare provider about how you have treated your own condition or disease. Tell them what impacts you have noticed in your everyday life and what has helped you. Discuss together what things support your rehabilitation and promote recovery or the quality of your life with a chronic disease.

How people with medical conditions experience their state of health and medical condition varies. Therefore, the objectives of treatment may be different for different people, even if they have the same medical issue. The objectives of treatment may also vary depending on different life situations. It is important that you consider the effect of your medical condition to your everyday life and quality of life in advance and discuss it with healthcare professionals. By discussing these, you can influence the objectives of your treatment and, if necessary, adjust your own expectations.

There may be a lot of bureaucracy involved in healthcare, but a healthcare appointment should not be focused on filling out forms or browsing survey responses in databases. In addition to treating the

medical condition, patients need to be treated as human beings. A medical condition is only a part of a person, and it does not define the person. Good care is seeing the person.

The patient must not be sidelined in their own care. It is not advisable to make treatment decisions without ensuring that a common understanding on the treatment with the patient exist. Treatment should take into account the feelings, convictions and values of the patient.

If treating the disease requires changes in the daily life of the patient, success is often dependent on the self-confidence of the patient and their preconceptions about the likelihood of success. It is important to talk about the treatment in a manner that empowers and encourages the patient and makes them focus on things that they can achieve or avoid by acting as proposed. Everyday self-care and lifestyle changes will not succeed unless the patient is able to adopt the change and implement it in their life on a long-term basis.

If you have a medical condition: Make sure you know what the objective of your treatment is, as it can vary. You can prevent or slow down the progress of most conditions with your actions. Trust the professional's skills and assessment of your health. A positive attitude towards yourself and your life pays off. Trust yourself and your chances of succeeding in self-care.

If you are a healthcare professional: Foster a patient-centred treatment culture. Motivate and engage the patient in self-care through your interaction. Make sure the patient understands what you are saying. Give the patient time to ask questions and digest your answers.



PRACTICE 3:

People take care of themselves when they have the right tools for it.

According to the members panel of the Organisation for Respiratory Health in Finland (2019), patient skills include:

- » the ability to remain calm
- » the ability to take your time during appointments
- » the courage to ask more information on unclear issues
- » the courage to find out more about unclear issues
- » the ability to stand up for yourself and knowing your rights.

4. Appointments and preparing for them

Many people search for information on various diseases and on the issues that may affect their health online. In addition, personal health can be monitored by various metrics and with digital applications. The patient may know or assume to know – whether they have a reason to or not – plenty about diseases and their treatment when they come in for an appointment.

The patient's personal medical history, duration and number of medical conditions and the permanency of the therapeutic relationships they have had also have an effect on how the patient prepares for an appointment. Long-term therapeutic relationships enable building confidential and good interaction and help to maintain it. If a patient encounters a new healthcare professional at every appointment, the importance of being prepared is emphasised as is the degree to which the patient can tell the professional about their situation in a structured manner.

It is normal to be nervous before a healthcare appointment. Even if you prepare to ask questions in advance and to explain your condition, some things can be forgotten and the conversation can

take a direction than you did not anticipate.

The Omaolo.fi online service can provide you with personalised recommendations on what public healthcare services you can use. It can also be used to make an assessment on your need for treatment and your symptoms.

A medication list is an up-to-date list of all the medicines you are taking. It includes prescription medicines prescribed by a physician, over the counter medicines, dietary supplements and vitamins, as well as information on vaccines. In addition to the product, it is also advisable to record the dose and the intended use. Always keep your medication list up to date. It is a good idea to bring a list of medications with you on appointments.

Even if you listen carefully during the appointment, you should not just rely on your memory for remembering what was agreed and what instructions you received. According to studies, only about 20% of the issues discussed during the healthcare appointments is remembered. Therefore, it is important that the patient receives information about the medication list, the treatment plan and the instructions also in writing.



The Organisation for Respiratory Health in Finland has published forms for people with asthma and COPD that they can use for preparing for appointments. Print the form that suits your situation online (www.hengityслиitto.fi) or write your free-form notes to take with you to the appointment. ●●●●●●●●



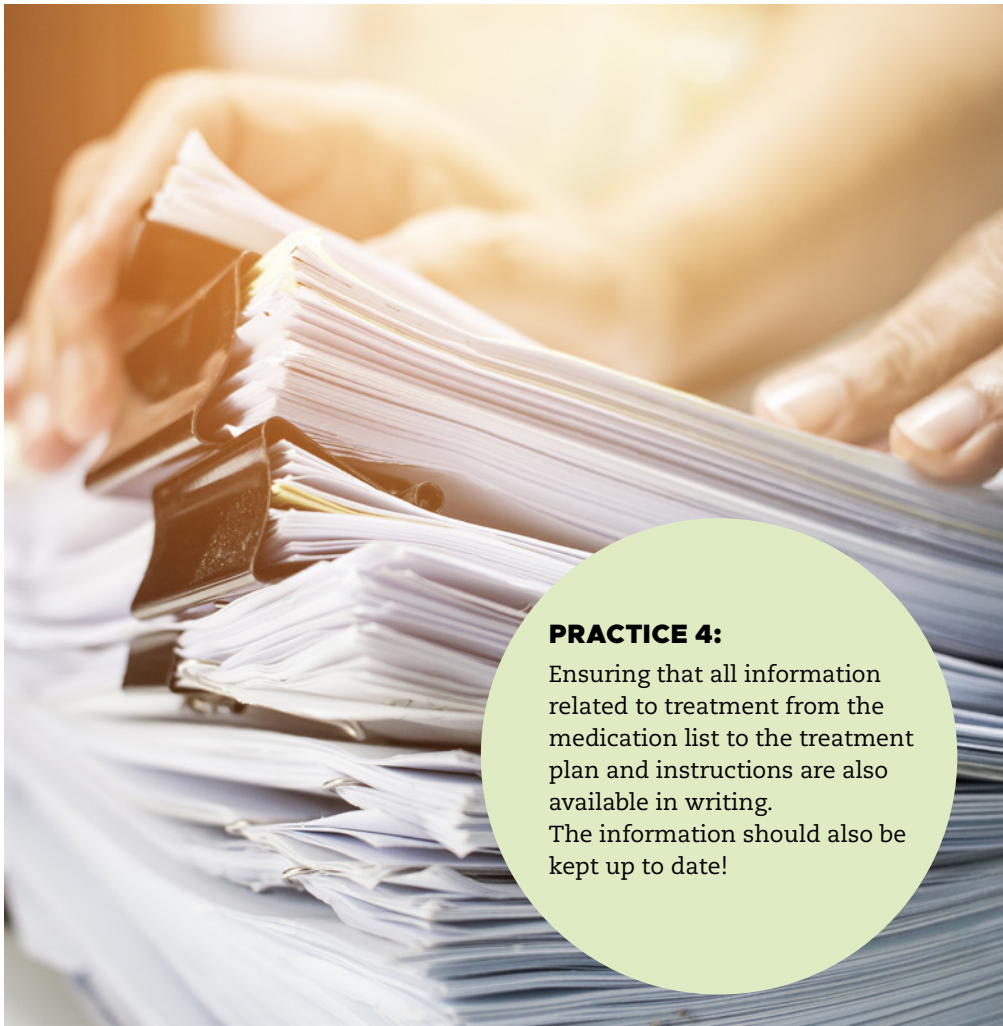
The format of the medication list is irrelevant, it can be a handwritten or electronically maintained list. Tips for making a medication list can be found at: <https://laakekortti.fi/> and https://www.fimea.fi/web/en/for_public/list-of-medicines

If you have a medical condition: Update your medication list and take notes in advance for your appointment. Bring up the need for written information and, if necessary, ask to receive all important information in writing as well to support your memory. At the end of the appointment, double check that you understood the key information on your treatment and self-care correctly.

The nervousness can be released after the appointment visit as a variety of emotions, such as being annoyed that you forgot to ask something and the forgotten issue can keep bothering you,

even if the appointment was otherwise a successful experience. You can always ask again, so feel free to contact your healthcare providers if you cannot find the answer in the written instructions given to you.

If you are a healthcare professional: Make sure your patients get answers to the things unclear to them. If necessary, refer the patient to someone who can answer their questions. Provide the patient with written materials they can read at home such as a treatment plan, instructions, a patient handbook, a set of basic information or notes.



PRACTICE 4:

Ensuring that all information related to treatment from the medication list to the treatment plan and instructions are also available in writing. The information should also be kept up to date!

POLICYMAKER!

A treatment plan is an important tool for the treatment of people with chronic diseases. The healthcare and social welfare services reform must enforce its role. Helping in making this happen means you to ensure equality for people with chronic diseases in different parts of Finland.



5. Remote interaction emphasises trust

In addition to appointments, patients and healthcare professionals increasingly encounter each and communicate through various phones or digital devices. With remote interaction, the importance of preparation and trust is emphasised. When we do not see the other person, we do not see their expressions and gestures either and the significance of the words used increases. Others listen more carefully, while others lose focus more easily. In a chat, we communicate in writing and often with short sentences.

Remote interaction enables routine check-ups and asking very specific questions and receiving specific answers. It emphasises the mutual nature of the therapeutic relationship and the need to trust that the other party will do their part in the treatment as agreed. This is why it is important to have the courage to let the other party know if something is explained too quickly or the messages include things the other party does not understand.

Today, various digital healthcare services, such as omakanta.fi and omaolo.fi, contain material that supplement remote interaction. Such a material can be information on examinations and their results, appointments and agreed treatments. These materials continue the interaction between the patient and healthcare professionals in one direction with written messages. The use of clear and simple language also promotes understanding the written information.

Every interaction is an opportunity to ensure the treatment objectives are achieved. You can reduce misunderstandings by thinking positively about the person you are communicating with and by interpreting messages as literally as possible. It is a good idea to leave humour to other situations. The situation is challenging for both parties and requires a lot of concentration, but many things can still be successfully handled in remote interaction as well.



6. Health has a price

As a rule, caring for your health is cheaper than healthcare. The added costs resulting from the provision of more extensive medical care are not good for the patient or the society.

Healthcare resources are limited, and healthcare professionals often work under pressure both resource- and time-wise. Good interaction can prevent misunderstandings regarding treatment, medication and self-care guidelines. In addition, all parties will have a common understanding on how the treatment will progress, how monitoring is carried out in the everyday life of the patient, who is responsible for scheduling the next appointment and in what situations should the patient contact the healthcare provider themselves.

The patient's commitment to self-care and the patient's confidence in themselves and their ability to succeed plays an important role in the success of self-care. Some lifestyle changes are easier than others. This is why it is important to listen to the patient and encourage them to make the necessary changes.

Non-implemented or improper self-care, avoidable misunderstandings, unnecessary appointments and appointments made too late all affect the price of treatment.

Inefficient healthcare is also costly for society. If a person actively participates in their own treatment, the time they need to spend in a hospital may be reduced by up to 30%.



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30 %

If you have a medical condition: In people with chronic diseases, successful self-care has a significant impact on the person's health and quality of life. Stay motivated and engage in self-care independently with the support of healthcare professionals and your peers and loved ones. Make sure you know when and in what situations you should book an appointment with your physician. Prepare for the appointment (see page 12). If you cannot make the appointment, be sure to cancel it.

If you are a healthcare professional: Listen to the patient, leave some time for questions. Make a connection between the instructions you provide and the patient's everyday life and explain the changes the patient needs to make in concrete terms. Give instructions in writing as well, as it is difficult to internalize all information at once. Make sure that the patient has understood the instructions on follow-up visits and that they understand that the responsibility for booking the next appointments remains with them.

PRACTICE 5:

Jointly planned and implemented treatment reduces healthcare costs. When there are sufficient resources for providing guidance on self-care, emergency visits and hospitalisation days are reduced.

POLICYMAKER!

The healthcare and social welfare services reform must properly include the perspective of the patients. Providing patients support in the form of preventive care and in primary healthcare slows down the growth of social welfare and healthcare expenditure brought by the population getting older. We can influence the amount of patients' that need specialised medical care.

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**Other
handbooks**
www.hengityслиitto.fi



**Organisation
for
Respiratory**

The Organisation for Respiratory Health in Finland

5 practices for good care



PRACTICE 1

Respectful
interaction
increases trust.

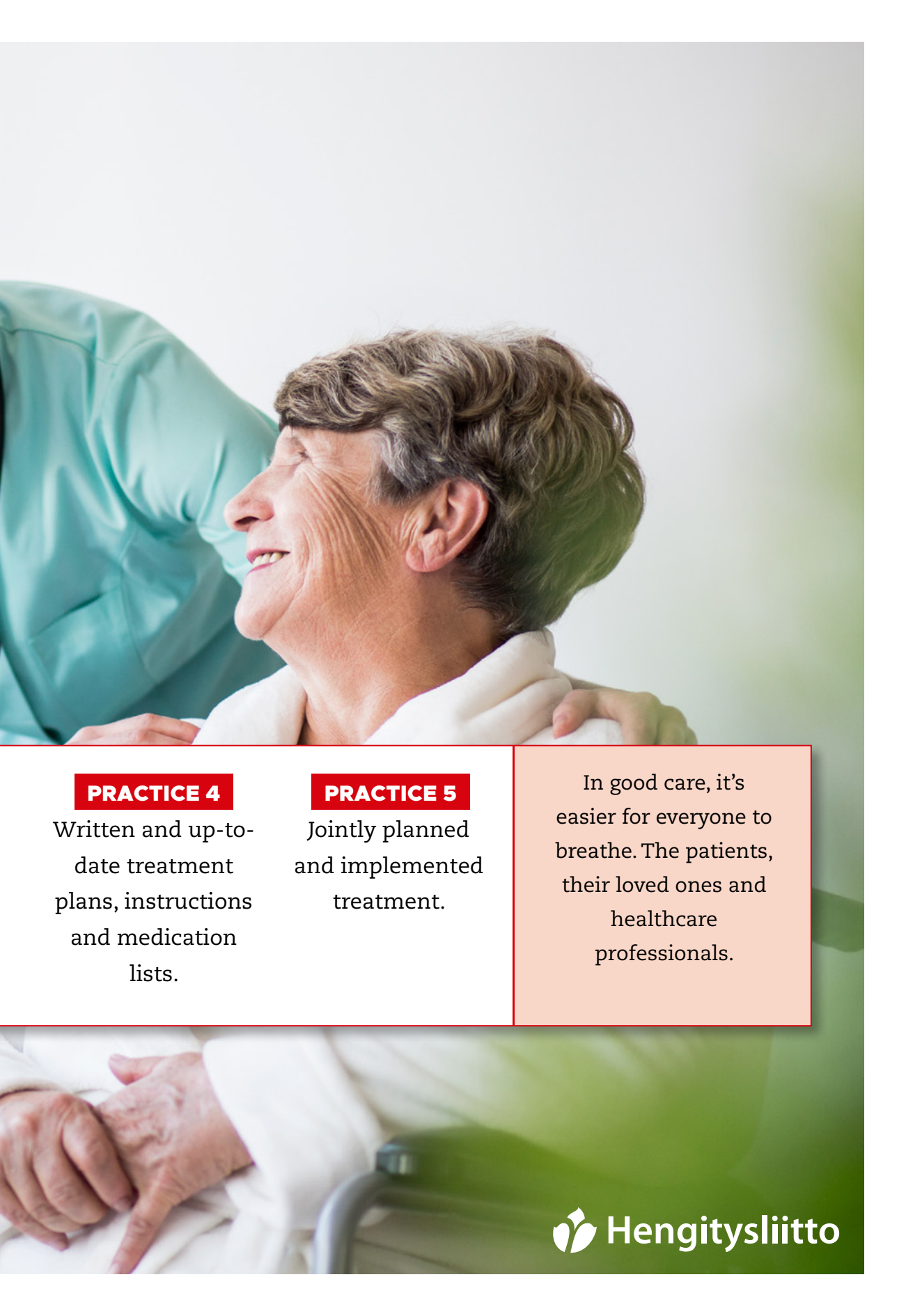
PRACTICE 2

Properly instructed
self-care increases the
quality of life and
reduces healthcare
visits.

PRACTICE 3

People take care of
themselves when
they have the
right tools for it.






PRACTICE 4

Written and up-to-date treatment plans, instructions and medication lists.

PRACTICE 5

Jointly planned and implemented treatment.

In good care, it's easier for everyone to breathe. The patients, their loved ones and healthcare professionals.



**The Organisation for
Respiratory Health in
Finland's programme
for patient skills and
good care**

**The Organisation for
Respiratory Health in
Finland**

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Together we can achieve more

At the Organisation for Respiratory Health in Finland, we are working towards a world in which we can all breathe more easily. Read more about our activities, respiratory health and respiratory diseases, and find your own way to get involved.

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