

How to Get the Most from Your Doctor Visit

Before You Go

1. Think of Your Doctor as Your Partner

Modern health care requires you, as a patient, to become an equal partner in understanding and treating your condition. You and your doctor must tackle health problems side by side, as a team. *Help us become a part of your team and your medical home.*

2. Write Your Questions Down

In between appointments you should jot down any and all questions you'd like to ask your doctor.

Keep a running list where you'll see it often and be able to find it when you need it. If you get the answer to a question before your next appointment, that's great! Just cross it off the list!

3. Be Organized

Use a folder or notebook to hold your health information and keep it all together.

This folder should have:

1. Notes and instructions from your last appointment, a good record of medications and treatment changes, vitals sign, weight, etc.
2. Questions you have, since your last appointment.
3. Results of tests or health screens (such as those from Health Fairs) you have had done at places other than your family doctor's office.
4. A list of the medications you're currently on and what they're supposed to do for you. You should carry a copy of this- along with emergency notification- in your wallet at all times. Include a list of your allergies.
5. Ads, brochures, or materials- in brief- that relate to your disease.
6. DON'T show up with a notebook the size of a dictionary! Do not show more than one or two materials (as mentioned above) to your doctor at each appointment. Too much information will only frustrate both of you.

Once You're There

1. Get Down to Business

Say hello and get down to the business at hand- tell your doctor why you came to see them and what's been going on with your health since your last appointment.

2. Know Your Meds

Know what medications you're on, and what they are supposed to do for you. If you don't know, please ask. Review all your medications with your doctor (even those prescribed by other doctors) as well as vitamins and herbal supplements. **BRING ALL YOUR MEDICATIONS WITH YOU TO YOUR APPOINTMENT.** Ask about medication side effects and interactions. Learn what changes to your medication you should make on your own in response to changes in your condition.

3. "So, what brings you here today?"

Tell your doctor what happened that caused you to book the appointment, or in the case of a routine physical, tell your doctor what – if anything- has changed since last time. Be specific (this is where your list of questions comes in). Your doctor wants to help you, but will not be able to do so without good information from you. (Unless you report changes in your health, your doctor will assume you're doing exactly as you were the last time you visited.)

4. Be Honest

Still having trouble quitting smoking? Puffing more than prescribed on your inhaler? Tell your doctor! Have what you think are embarrassing questions? Just ask for help- that is why we are here. Be honest with your doctor- and demand honesty in return.

5. Respect Your Doctor s Time and Limitations

Like it or not, the current health care system is requiring doctors to squeeze more into each day, and that means we have to do all we can by working within that system. The more you can prepare for your visit and have specific things to ask, the better your time will be used.

Completing Your Visit

1. Did your doctor order new medications for you? Do you understand how and when to take them?
2. Do you have enough medications to last you until your next visit?
3. Do you need to schedule a return visit?

Your doctor's and health care professionals entered their profession to help you. Help us by doing your part, Know what you need to know- and do what you need to do- to help your doctor help you.