

How to Prepare for Your Next Visit with Your Doctor



Have you ever left an in-person or video visit with your doctor wishing you had remembered to ask a certain question?

It is easy to feel rushed and forget what you wanted to say or to end your appointment still uncertain about the information you heard.

Follow these tips to become a more empowered and engaged partner in your own health.

1. Prepare in advance the top two or three concerns you want to raise with your doctor; for example,

- ✓ Do you have any difficulties following up with your treatment and other recommendations from the doctor?
- ✓ Have you had trouble sleeping, concentrating or eating? Make sure that you mention your emotional state and any personal circumstances that may be affecting your health.
- ✓ Do you feel you need any kind of extra help or support?
- ✓ Mention your main concerns to the doctor at the beginning of your visit.

2. Have a notebook and pen handy during your visit in case you need to take notes.

3. Write down a list of your symptoms before your appointment.

- ✓ What type of symptoms are they?
- ✓ When did they start?
- ✓ What makes them better or worse?

4. Make a list of all medications you are currently taking, including over-the-counter medications, vitamins, herbs or supplements.

5. If you have seen other doctors, have all information or documents they provided with you.

6. Never be embarrassed to tell your doctor if you did not understand what was explained to you about your health condition.

- ✓ Repeat what the doctor said to be sure you understood and ask for clarification if needed.

7. Be very clear about the treatment prescribed to you.

- ✓ Do you understand how and when the medication should be taken?
- ✓ Are there any side effects?
- ✓ How will you know if the medication is working?
- ✓ What happens if you miss a dose?
- ✓ If you are not sure about the prescribed treatment, it is reasonable to ask if there are other treatment options available.
- ✓ Ask for a printed handout or information emailed to you with information about your treatment so you can read at home.

8. Ask your doctor to explain your test results, and request a copy of the results.

9. If you have difficulty speaking up for yourself, have a family member or friend with you for support.

10. If you have trouble hearing or seeing your doctor due to a faulty internet connection or some other reason, tell your doctor.

- ✓ For example, you can say "I cannot hear too well. Can you speak loudly and slowly?"

11. Always be honest with your doctor.

- ✓ You may not want to admit that you stopped taking your medication or that you are drinking or smoking too much, but your doctor needs to know everything to ensure that you are receiving optimal care.

12. Before you conclude your doctor's appointment, be sure you understand what needs to happen next.

- ✓ Do you need further tests?
- ✓ When do you need to see your doctor again for a follow-up appointment? Will that be done over phone call or video call or will it be in-person?
- ✓ If you have questions or concerns later, how should you contact your doctor?

