

Getting The Most Out Of Your Healthcare Visits

Communicating With Your Health Care Team

Prepare

Prepare for your visit by making a list of the health concerns you want to talk about. Know that you might only have time to talk about one issue. Tell your doctor about your most important concerns first, to make sure you have time to talk about them.

Know your medicines

Bring a list of your medicines when you go to your medical appointments. Many people see more than one doctor. Having a list of your medicines you are taking can help you and your doctor make decisions about your treatment.

Use the “Ask Me 3 Questions”

When you go see your doctor, nurse or pharmacist, ask:

- 1.) What is my main health problem?
- 2.) What do I need to do?
- 3.) Why is it important for me to do this?

At Your Visit

Take notes - Write down the things you talk about and the decisions you make with your healthcare team. This will help you remember what you decided and what you need to do.

Take someone with you - Bring a trusted friend or a member of your family to help you at your visits. He or she can help take notes and ask questions.

Ask for definitions - It's okay to say you don't understand. Health information that is new can be confusing. If someone on your healthcare team uses terms you don't understand, ask for an explanation in plain language. Asking questions helps you understand what you need to do to stay well, or to get better.

Recap - At the end of your appointment, tell your doctor or nurse what you plan to do and when and how you will do it.

Follow-up - If you get home and still have questions, call or send a secure email message to your healthcare team. Secure email works well because it gives you complete privacy and you will have a written record of your doctor's reply. Talk with your doctor or healthcare team about setting up secure email messaging.

Medications

Know your medicines

When you get a prescription for a new medicine, ask your doctor or pharmacist these questions:

- What is the name of the medicine?
- Why do I need it?
- What time should I take it?
- How long should I take it?
- Are there any side effects?
- Could this medicine interact with other medicines that I am taking, including non-prescription medicines or supplements?

Tips to help you keep track of your medicines

- Keep a record of all your medicines, including non-prescription medicines.
- Write down the medicine name, the dose you take, how often you take it, and the reason why you are taking it.
- Take your medication record with you when you go to see your doctor or pharmacist and ask about possible drug interactions.
- Go through your medicines often. Check for prescriptions that are out of date.
- Talk to a member of your healthcare team before you change anything about the way you take your medicines.
- Use a pillbox to help you organize your medicines.
- Ask your pharmacist to put easy-to-open caps or large-print labels on medicine bottles.