

HOW TO TALK ABOUT YOUR HEALTHCARE NEEDS

No matter who you are, a visit to the doctor can be a stressful experience. Visits are often brief, and when the doctor provides confusing explanations or instructions, you may feel like your healthcare needs are being ignored.

This guide is meant to help you prepare for your medical appointments so you can comfortably discuss your concerns with your doctor and receive the appropriate medical care.



BEFORE YOUR APPOINTMENT

Write down a list of your concerns, symptoms, and questions in order of importance for the doctor to add to your medical file. If the appointment ends before you get through everything, you'll have covered the most important items.

Consider: How will you remember everything the doctor says? It might be helpful to take notes, or you can bring a friend or family member. You can also record the appointment on your cell phone or other audio recording device. If you choose to record the visit, make sure to inform your doctor first.

AT YOUR APPOINTMENT

Here are a few examples of what you could say in the following situations:

If you don't want to be weighed before your appointment: "No thanks, I'll skip the scale today. It's not relevant to my treatment."

If the doctor uses confusing language that you don't understand, ask for clarity: "Excuse me, could you explain that again more plainly? I didn't understand."

If the doctor dismisses your complaints: "I'm not ready to move on yet. I don't think you're hearing how concerned I am about this."

If the doctor is not willing to run the tests you want performed: "Will you please note in my file that my request for [an ultrasound/an MRI/a blood test] was denied?"

If you feel pressured to agree to a plan of treatment you're uncomfortable with: "I'm going to need some more time to think about this and to get a second opinion."

If the appointment is ending and you don't feel like you have any answers: "What are our next steps?"

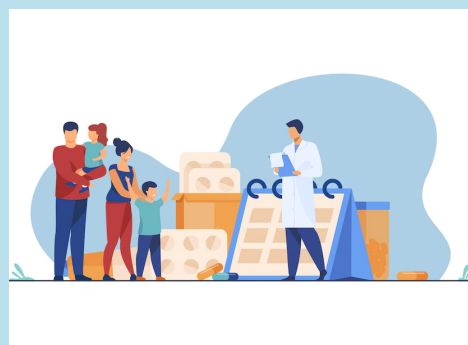


Don't be afraid to ask questions and tell your healthcare professionals what you need.

Patients, nurses, and doctors must work together as a team. Make sure to state your needs clearly.

Before the end of your appointment, be sure you know the answers to the following questions:

- What is my main problem?
- What does the doctor need me to do?
- Why is it important that I do this?
- What symptom changes and medication side effects should I expect?
- When should I call the office?



AFTER YOUR APPOINTMENT

As the patient, you are in charge of your healthcare. You can always see another doctor for a second opinion about your condition, especially if you receive a serious or an unsatisfactory diagnosis.

If your doctor works at an office alongside other physicians, the front desk staff will be able to help you schedule an appointment for a second opinion. Otherwise, you can call the 1-800 number on your insurance card to find another doctor who is covered under your insurance plan.



How To Talk About Your Healthcare Needs



Before Your Appointment

List of symptoms/concerns:

- Check insurance coverage
- Plan for recalling information (notes/recording/friend or family)
- Do you need accommodations? Interpreter?



At Your Appointment

Notes:

- Ask for clarification
- Ask for additional tests
- Ask about all options available
- Take time before committing to a treatment plan



After Your Appointment

- Ask yourself if you feel satisfied with the appointment. Do you want to ask for a second opinion?
- Make any additional appointments: _____

MORE INFORMATION



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