



# How To Make the Most of Your Visit to Your Doctor

## How Can You Make this Happen?

- ❖ Know what you want.
- ❖ Write down your questions and issues.
- ❖ Arrive on time.
- ❖ Know the plan.

## Talk (and Listen) With Your Health Care Provider

### Tip: Give information. Don't wait to be asked!

- ❖ Describe your symptoms and your health history.
- ❖ Tell your doctor personal information that may help to explain what is going on with your health, even if it makes you feel embarrassed or uncomfortable.
- ❖ Bring important health information with you, and keep it up to date. You might want to give copies to your family.
- ❖ Bring all of your medicines or a list of them.
- ❖ Tell your doctor about any herbal products or alternative medicines you use or treatments you receive.
- ❖ Bring other medical information, such as x-rays, test results and medical records.

### Ask Questions: If you don't, your doctor may think you understand everything that was said.

#### Tip: Get information.

- ❖ Write down your questions before your visit. List the most important ones first to make sure they get asked and answered.
- ❖ You might want to bring someone with you to help you ask questions and help you understand and/or remember the answers (especially if you and your doctors have had difficulty understanding each other in the past ).
- ❖ Ask your doctor to draw pictures if that might help to explain something.
- ❖ Take notes.
- ❖ Let your doctor know if you need more time. If there is not time that day, perhaps you can speak to a nurse or physician assistant on staff. Or, ask if you can call later to speak with someone.
- ❖ Ask if your doctor has washed his or her hands before starting to examine you. If you are uncomfortable asking this question directly, you might ask, "I've noticed that some doctors and nurses wash their hands or wear gloves before touching people. Why is that?"

#### Tip: Take information home.

- ❖ Ask for clear written instructions (an action plan for your care).
- ❖ Your doctor also may have brochures and audio tapes and videotapes that can help you. If not, ask how you can get such materials.

## Once You Leave the Doctor's Office, Stay Involved

- ❖ If you have questions, call.
- ❖ If your symptoms get worse, or if you have problems with your medicine, call.
- ❖ If you had tests and do not hear from your doctor, call for your test results.
- ❖ If your doctor said you need to have certain tests, schedule them. (Ask your doctor's office to help set these up.)
- ❖ If your doctor said you should see a specialist, make an appointment. (Ask your doctor's office to help set these up.)

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