



Tips for Talking With Your Doctor

Remembering What the Doctor Says

No matter what your age, it's easy to forget a lot of what your doctor says. Here are some ideas to help make sure you have all the information you need.

- ✓ **Take notes** — Take along a notepad and something to write with, and jot down the main points, or ask the doctor to write them down for you. If you can't write while the doctor is talking to you, make notes in the waiting room after the visit. Or, bring a tape recorder along, and (with the doctor's permission) record what is said. Recording is especially helpful if you want to share the details of the visit with others.
- ✓ **Make sure you understand** — It is hard to remember a diagnosis or instructions about a treatment that you don't understand. Ask about anything that does not seem clear. For instance, you might say: *"I want to make sure I understand. Could you explain that a little more?"* or *"I'm not familiar with that word. What does it mean?"* Another way to check is to repeat what you think the doctor means in your own words and ask, *"Is this correct?"*
- ✓ **Get written or recorded materials** — Ask if your doctor has any brochures, fact sheets, DVDs, CDs, cassettes, or videotapes about your health conditions or treatments. For example, if your doctor says that your blood pressure is high, he or she may give you brochures explaining what causes high blood pressure and what you can do about it. Ask the doctor to recommend other sources, such as websites, public libraries, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies that may have written or recorded information you can use.
- ✓ **Talk to other members of the healthcare team** — Sometimes the doctor may want you to talk with other health professionals who can help you understand and carry out the decisions about how to manage your condition. Nurses, physician assistants, pharmacists, and occupational or physical therapists may be able to take more time with you than the doctor.
- ✓ **Call or email the doctor** — If you are uncertain about the doctor's instructions after you get home, call the office. A nurse or other staff member can check with the doctor and call you back. You could ask whether the doctor, or other health professional you have talked to, has an email address you can use to send questions.