



Tips for Talking With Your Doctor

Getting Ready for a Doctor's Visit

A basic plan can help you get the most out of your medical appointment:

- ✓ **Make a list of your concerns and prioritize them** — Do you have a new symptom you want to ask the doctor about? Do you want to get a flu shot? Are you concerned about how a treatment is affecting your daily life? If you have more than a few items to discuss, put them in order. Start with the ones most important to you.
- ✓ **Plan to update the doctor** — Let your doctor know what has happened to your health since your last visit. If you have been treated in the emergency room or by a specialist, tell the doctor right away. Mention any changes in your appetite, weight, sleep, energy level, vision, or hearing. Also tell the doctor about recent changes in medications you take or their effects on you.
- ✓ **Take information with you** — Bring a list of all your prescription drugs, over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal remedies or supplements, including the dose. Or, put them all in a bag and bring them with you to your appointment. Also take your insurance cards, the names and phone numbers of your other doctors, and any medical records your doctor doesn't already have.
- ✓ **Make sure you can see and hear as well as possible** — If you use eyeglasses and/or a hearing aid, wear them at the doctor's visit. Let the doctor and staff know if you have a hard time seeing or hearing. For example, you may want to say: *“My hearing makes it hard to understand everything you're saying. It helps when you speak slowly.”*
- ✓ **Consider bringing a family member or friend** — If you bring a companion to the appointment, tell him or her in advance what you want from your visit and if you'd like some alone time with your doctor. Your companion can remind you what you planned to discuss with the doctor if you forget, take notes during the visit, and help you remember what the doctor said.
- ✓ **Plan for an interpreter if you know you'll need one** — Arrange with your doctor's office for an interpreter before your visit. Make sure the interpreter clearly understands your symptoms and/or condition, so the information is accurately communicated to the doctor. Let the doctor, your interpreter, or the staff know if you do not understand your diagnosis or the treatment instructions.