



AGING WELL SERIES

How to Talk to Your Healthcare Provider

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The healthcare world can be confusing, especially when visiting a provider, such as a doctor or nurse. It is important that you feel comfortable going to your provider and getting all the information you need.

Sometimes patients do not ask questions during their visit. They may feel embarrassed, or don't want the doctor to think they are stupid. It is much better — for patients and providers — when patients ask questions. Discuss anything that you think might affect your health. Healthcare providers make the best decisions possible based, in part, on the information that you provide.

If a patient doesn't understand the information given, bad outcomes are possible. Perhaps medication is not taken, or taken improperly, leading to a hospitalization. Maybe an appointment

isn't kept because the patient didn't know about it or understand its importance. Or available preventive services — shots, screening tests, etc. — aren't used, even when available and covered by insurance.

Before your office visit

- Write down any questions you want to ask.
- Bring an updated list of all medications you take or the actual bottles of medications (prescribed, herbal, and over-the-counter).
- Bring your blood pressure numbers and/or your blood sugar numbers you have recorded since your last visit.
- Bring your insurance card(s).
- Consider bringing a trusted family member or friend.

During your visit

Remember: This visit is all about you! You know your body better than anyone else, so speak up and ask questions, especially if you are unsure about what is being discussed.

- Ask everyone to speak in basic terms if you do not understand something being said.
- Ask for information in writing.
- If information is given to you but you cannot read it due to small print or the medical language, ask the nurse to update and reprint.
- Offer to “teach back” or restate what the doctor or nurse told you to ensure that you understand the information correctly.

After the visit

It happens to everyone at some point – you leave the office and forget the details of what was said in the office. If you find yourself with questions at this point:

- Call the office and talk with the nurse for clarification of the visit.
- You can talk with a pharmacist about any medication questions, such as how medicines could interact, or what time of day they should be taken.
- Be sure to continue any home monitoring and recording that has been asked of you (for example, taking your own blood pressure or blood sugar and writing down the results).



References

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