

How to Communicate Better with Your Doctor

As a patient, it is important to take an active role in your health care. Of course, while providers should provide expert information to you regarding your health and necessary treatments, it is also up to you to make the most of your healthcare experience. Here are some actions you can take to improve communication with your doctor and ensure you receive the best care experience possible.

Prioritize

Before speaking with your doctor, prioritize what you would like to bring up during your appointment. Make sure to discuss the most pressing topics first. Often, doctors have a very limited amount of time with each patient, as they must see many patients in one day. They may not actually intend to appear rushed, but their schedule may be out of their control. In addition, having a prioritized list of topics to discuss shows that you are ready to play an active role in your health care and allows for open conversation between you and your doctor.

Take Notes

If you are visiting your doctor for more than a wellness appointment, he or she may provide you important details regarding diagnosis, treatment or prescription. To ensure you do not forget any information, bring a small notepad and pen with you to jot down some notes. If you are comfortable, you can also bring a family member or friend along to do so for you as you speak with the doctor. Keeping a record of the appointment will help you to better follow up in the future with your doctor regarding any issues discussed.

Bring Questions

Being a proactive patient means asking your doctor questions. For example, if your doctor prescribes you medication, you should ask questions about potential side effects, dosage, how long you should take the medication, possible alternatives, etc. Or, if you have been diagnosed with a certain condition, you should ask questions about whether any medication is necessary, how long you will have the condition and what aspects of your life may be affected by the condition. Asking questions helps you to better understand your health and work with your doctor to improve it.

Bring a Close Family Member or Friend

Consider bringing an individual you trust and are comfortable with to your appointment. They serve as another set of ears to remember things your doctor has said which you may have forgotten. Visiting the doctor can be a stressful experience for some, so this individual can serve as a source of moral support for you during the appointment. He or she can also remind you of anything you may have forgotten to mention to your doctor.

Utilize a Personal Health Record (PHR)

In this day and age, patient medical information is being stored electronically. Care providers are using personal health records (PHRs) for patients to view their health information themselves. The purpose of the PHR is to allow the patient to record and maintain his or her health information in a confidential and safe online environment. Patients can keep track of appointments, physician instructions, medications, prescriptions, insurance information and more. Ask your doctor or nurse about whether they have a PHR system, and if so, utilize this tool to stay on top of your health information. This will help you have thorough, well-informed discussions with all of your care providers.

Resources

- American Medical Association: www.ama-assn.org
- Health.gov: <https://health.gov/>

Here when you need us.

Call: 844-207-5465

Online: guidanceresources.com

App: GuidanceNowSM

Web ID: LivingME

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