

# Tips for talking to your doctor

Taking an active role in your health care can help you get the best care possible from your doctor. One way to do this is to improve your relationship with your doctor. The following are some tips to help you and your doctor improve your health care together.

## Talk to your doctor

Be sure to tell your doctor about any current and past health care issues or concerns. It's important to share any information you can, even if you're embarrassed. Give your doctor the following information during the exam:

- Any symptoms you are having.
- Your health history. You can create a "health journal" for yourself on paper or in a notebook, and bring it to your appointments. See "Creating a Health Journal" for more information.
- Personal information, including whether you are stressed or if your life is changing.
- Any medicines you are currently taking. Bring them with you or create a list of all your medicines. Include information about when and how often you take the medicine. You should also write down the strength of the medicine (for example, do you take 150 mg or 200 mg?).
- Any side effects you have from your medicine(s), especially if it makes you feel sick or if you think you may be allergic to it.
- Any vitamins or supplements you take.
- Any X-rays, tests results or medical records you have can be brought with you to the appointment.

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## Ask questions

Don't be afraid to speak up. It's important for you to let your doctor know if you don't understand something. If you don't ask questions, your doctor will think you understand everything he or she has told you. The following are some tips on asking your doctor questions during the exam:

- Ask every time you don't understand something.
- If you have questions before the appointment, just write them down and ask them during the exam. Be sure to write down the most important questions first to make sure they get answered.
- Tell your doctor when you need more time to talk about something. If the doctor isn't available to help, you should be able to talk to a physician assistant or a nurse. If no one else is available, see if you can schedule another appointment to continue your talk.

## Take information home with you

Taking written or recorded information home with you can help you remember information and instructions any time you need to. Your doctor is a good source of accurate information you can trust. The following are types of information you can take home with you:

- Notes that you have taken during the appointment. It's ok for you to write down the information your doctor gives you. Sometimes it helps to bring a friend or family member with you. They can help write down the answers to your questions.
- Written instructions from your doctor.
- A tape recording. Ask your doctor if it's okay to bring a tape recorder to the appointment.
- Brochures or other educational materials. If there aren't any available, ask where you can find some.

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## Follow up with your doctor

Make sure to follow any instructions your doctor gave you during the appointment, like taking medicine, scheduling a test or scheduling an appointment with a specialist. If you're confused or if you've forgotten some information, it's ok to contact your doctor. The following are some common reasons you may need to call your doctor:

- If you have any questions after the appointment. Ask to leave a message with the doctor or speak with a nurse.
- If you start to feel worse or have problems with your medicine.
- If you had tests and haven't got the results.

## Other Organizations

U.S. Surgeon General's My Family Health Portrait  
<https://familyhistory.hhs.gov/FHH/html/index.html>

Source: FamilyDoctor.org

For more information, visit:

<http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/healthcare-management/working-with-your-doctor/tips-for-talking-to-your-doctor.html>