

Make the Most of Your Medical Appointment: Appointment Planner

A simple plan can help you make the most of your medical appointment. Whether you're meeting a new doctor or health care professional, or seeing one you have known for years, there can be a lot to cover in a short time. The tips in this brochure can make it easier for you to remember everything you need to discuss.¹ These suggestions can be effective for both in-person and virtual (telehealth or video call) visits.²

Prepare...



What are your questions?

- Make a list of what you think is most important to discuss. What is your main reason for the visit? Maybe you have a new symptom you want to ask more about, or perhaps you want to get the flu shot. If there are a number of things you would like to talk about, prioritize them and ask about the most important ones at the beginning of the conversation with your health care professional¹



What medicines are you taking?

- Make a list of all the medicines you take, or put all your prescription drugs, over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, herbal remedies, and supplements in a bag and bring them with you. If it is a telehealth appointment, you may want to gather all your medications and place them within reach, so you can visually share them with your doctor^{1,3}
- To make sharing this information easier, consider using a paper form or a smartphone app to list, track, and share information about your medicines⁴

Questions I want to ask...



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If your appointment is virtual³:

- Gather any medical devices you might need, like a thermometer, blood glucose meter or scale. If possible, take and record any readings from these devices so you can share it with your doctor
- Find a quiet, well-lit spot without a lot of background noise
- Download any app or software you may need in advance of the appointment. Often your health care team will give you information about this prior to your appointment
- Make sure any devices you plan to use are in working order and fully charged

Participate...



Participate in your appointment and become a partner in your health care.

- Share information⁵
 - Be prepared to describe how you feel physically, as well as mentally and emotionally
 - Knowing how to communicate your problems and express your concerns makes you a better partner in your health care
- Be honest⁵
 - Expressing concern about your symptoms is not the same thing as complaining
- Your health care professional needs to know what your life is like to provide you with the best care⁵
 - This means knowing where you live, what you eat, how you sleep, what your sex life is like, whether you smoke or drink alcohol, and any major changes or stresses in your life
- Take notes and ask questions⁶
 - Don't hesitate to ask questions and voice concerns during your appointment. This is not the time to stay silent because you don't want to appear uncooperative or pushy or ask what seems like a "dumb" question
 - Write things down so you can remember what you talked about after the appointment

Notes during appointment...

Summarize...



At the end of your visit, ask for a recap and repeat back in your own words what you have heard to make sure you and your health care team are on the same page. This can also help your doctor to check your understanding of what was discussed.⁶⁻⁷

Be sure you know how to get in touch with someone at your doctor's office if you have further questions or to let them know if the treatment is—or isn't—working.⁵ Use the "Contact information" section of this planner to record names, telephone numbers, and email addresses of key members of your health care team.

Questions to ask about medicines...

Here are some questions to ask your doctor or pharmacist when you get a new medicine or one you are currently taking is changed⁸:

- What is the name of the medicine and why am I taking it?
- What medical condition does this medicine treat?
- How many times a day should I take it? At what time(s)? If the bottle says take "4 times a day," does that mean 4 times in 24 hours or 4 times during the daytime?
- How much medicine should I take?
- Should I take the medicine with food or not? Is there anything I should not eat or drink when taking this medicine?
- How long will this medicine take to work?
- Will this medicine cause problems if I am taking other medicines?
- Is it safe for me to drive while taking this medication?
- What does "as needed" mean?
- When should I stop taking the medicine?
- If I forget to take my medicine, what should I do?
- What side effects can I expect? What should I do if I have a problem?
- Will I need a refill? How do I arrange that?

Contact information...

References

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