

How to Prepare for my Medical Appointment

Make sure you have scheduled enough time with your doctor to answer all your questions. Most appointments are only scheduled 15 minutes at a time. You may want to schedule more time depending on how many questions you have. To get the most from your visit, tell the nurse, or person at the front desk, that you have questions for your doctor. Prepare your questions in advance. Start by asking the questions that are most important to you. If your doctor does not ask you if you have questions, ask your doctor when the best time would be to ask them. If you run out of time at your appointment, ask if there is another option for you to ask a question and get an answer later.

Understand the answers and next steps

It is very important to understand what your doctor recommends. Ask questions to make sure you understand what your doctor wants you to do.

- ✓ Take notes; *or*
- ✓ Bring someone to your appointment to help you understand and remember what you heard.
- ✓ If you don't understand or are confused, ask your doctor to explain the answer again.

The questions you may want to ask will depend on whether your doctor gives you a diagnosis; recommends a treatment, medical test, or surgery; or gives you a prescription for medicine.

Questions may include:

- What is my diagnosis?
- What are my treatment options?
 - What are the benefits of each option?
- Will I need a test?
 - What is the test for?
 - What will the results tell me?
- What will the medicine you are prescribing do?
 - How do I take it?
 - Are there any side effects?
- Why do I need surgery?
 - Are there other ways to treat my condition?
 - How often do you perform this surgery?
- Do I need to change my daily routine?
- What should I do next? Ask for written instructions, brochures, videos, or Web sites that may help you learn more.