

Nine Steps to A More Effective Visit With Your Doctor

These nine steps should help make your next visit with your doctor more effective and efficient. Health care is undergoing major changes, and doctors are challenged to see more patients and to complete more paperwork in the same amount of time. Therefore, patients today must be armed with information when they arrive for their doctor's visit. By bringing this nine-point checklist with completed information to your next doctor's visit, you will ensure that your time at your visit was well spent. A little preparation will save you waiting time and allow your doctor to spend more time focusing on you. It will also enhance the communication between you and your doctor.

This simple checklist can help you to get the most from your next doctor's visit. Take my advice and don't leave home without your checklist.

Bring these nine (9) items for a more effective visit with your doctor:

- 1 **Your insurance card and a photo id.** Inform staff of changes in address and phone numbers. All patients need to understand their insurance coverage. Everyone needs to know their deductible and copay. A lot of time is spent gathering this information, so be sure to provide accurate information to reduce your waiting time in the doctor's office.
- 2 **Names, phone numbers and dates of treatment by other healthcare providers** or health care facilities (i.e. urgent care centers or emergency rooms) where you have been treated since your last visit. Gathering medical information can be a time consuming process; the more accurate information you provide, the less time you will spend in this information gathering process.
- 3 **List of tests done since your last visit, including the name of the facilities where testing occurred and dates of the tests.** Bring test results with you to your appointment. This will greatly reduce the time you will spend waiting on test results.
- 4 **List of all current medications** (Include prescription drugs, over-the-counter medicines and vitamins). Be sure to list the name of each medicine, dosage and number of times you take the medicine each day. Include any allergies to medications, foods, or other products.
- 5 **List describing any side effects of newly prescribed medications.** This can include things like nausea, dizziness, constipation.
- 6 **Statement describing your primary problem.** Before you leave home, write one sentence describing the primary reason you want to be seen. In your own words, describe the symptoms of the main problem you want evaluated during your appointment. This will help with your discussion with your doctor.
You need to clearly describe the problems you are experiencing. Ask yourself? When did my problem start? How often does it occur? What makes it better or worse? If your problem causes pain, describe the pain. For example, merely saying "my back hurts" does not give the doctor enough information to determine your diagnosis. Be specific to better assist your doctor in taking care of your needs. Doctors want to help you; however, you need to provide specific information to assist the doctor in the process.
- 7 **Tell the receptionist about multiple problems.** If you have several problems, you need to make sure you express this clearly when your appointment is initially made with the receptionist. This will allow the staff to schedule a longer appointment for your visit. Otherwise, if you make an appointment for one problem and you want to discuss several problems, the office might ask that you arrange a follow-up for additional concerns.

When multiple problems are to be discussed, it is **extremely** important that you bring a written statement describing each problem discussing the symptoms as indicated in Number Six so you can discuss this information with your doctor. This will greatly help the doctor and the staff in taking care of you.

8. **A concise list of questions.** Think about the questions you have for the doctor before you leave home. Ask your questions while the doctor is in the examination room with you. Once the doctor has started examining another patient, it is difficult to return to your examination room. Creating your question list before you leave home should increase the likelihood that you receive answers to your concerns in a timely manner. General or routine questions can be answered by staff while waiting on the doctor.
9. **Pen and Paper.** This will allow you to make a note of any advice or information that your doctor gives you. Write down your diagnosis, this will allow you to read about your condition on your doctor's website.

Be sure to bring your nine (9) item checklist to your next doctor's visit. This will help you to have a more effective and efficient visit with your doctor. Each time you return for follow-up visits, continue to update your checklist to ensure that you make the most out of your doctor's visit. Bring your checklist to all doctor's visits.

Your Good Health is the mutual goal of the patient and the physician. Remember, preparation before your office visit can save you time in the doctor's office, and lead to a more effective and efficient visit with your physician.

Take my advice; don't leave home without your nine (9) point doctor visit checklist and make your visit more effective.

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Please provide answers to the questions listed below:

1. Current/ New Medications.
2. Side effects from medications.
3. Any new tests or other doctor visits since your last visit with us.
4. Primary reason for visit.
5. Additional problems or concern.
6. Questions for the doctor.

