

Health Point: Preparing for A Visit to Your Doctor



We all need to visit our health care providers once in awhile.

- Sometimes, you visit your doctor or nurse when you are feeling sick.
- Other times, you visit your health care provider when you are feeling well so that he or she can check your overall health.



People with developmental disabilities may need to visit their doctor more often than other people.

- You may need to talk to your doctor about your developmental disability and about other health conditions that you may have.
- You may see many different doctors who are trained to help you care for different parts of your body.



Preparing before your appointment will help you get the best care from your doctor.

- You can ask your support provider, a family member or a friend to help you to prepare for your appointment.



You or your support provider can call to make an appointment.



- When you call to make an appointment with your health care provider, be sure to have your medical insurance and your other personal information ready.
- Tell the person on the phone why you want to see your doctor. Keep a reminder of the date and time of your appointment.

Before you visit your doctor, make a list of your medications.

- Your doctor needs to know the medications you take, how often, and in what doses.
 - You or your support provider should bring a list with this information to your appointment.
 - Your list should include prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, vitamins, and any other health supplements that you may take.



You can also make a list of your concerns or questions.

- A list will help you to remember what you want to ask, or tell, your doctor about your health.
- You can practice asking these questions with someone you trust before your appointment.



It may help to bring a support person with you to your doctor's appointment.

- A support provider, friend, or family member can help you to:

- Relax
- Remind you about questions you may forget
- Write down instructions



- If you need time alone with the doctor, just ask them to wait outside.

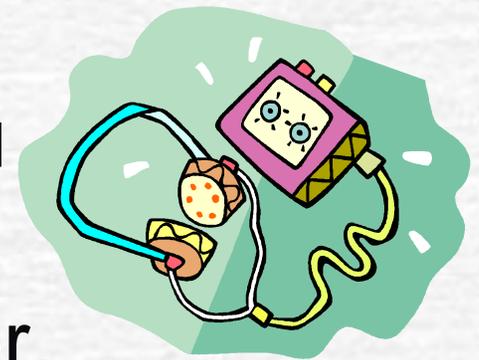
When you arrive at the office, you may have to wait to see your doctor.

- You may need to fill out forms about your health.



- You may have to wait with other patients while your doctor helps other people.

- You can bring something with you (like a book or a radio with earphones) to make waiting easier.



Your doctor or nurse will ask you questions. You can get the best care by being honest.

- You are the expert on how you feel.
- Being honest with your health care providers will help them to find the treatment that is right for you.
- Some questions may make you feel uncomfortable, but don't be embarrassed.
 - Your doctor needs to know the answer to decide what you can do to stay healthy.



During your appointment, it is okay to ask a lot of questions.

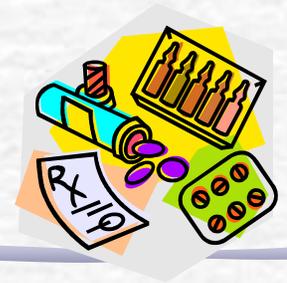
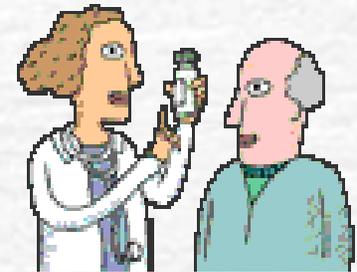
- If you don't understand what your doctor is saying, ask questions until you do.
- If you still don't understand your doctor's instructions, ask where you can go for more information.
- Nurses and pharmacists can also give you helpful information.



You should ask questions about any medications that your doctor says you should take.

- Some questions you can ask are:

- How can this medicine help me?
- When should I take this medicine?
- How often should I take this medicine?
- Should I take it with food or water?
- What are the side effects and what should I do if I feel them?
- Can I take this with other medications?



You might have more questions when you get home.



- If you have more questions after you have left your appointment, you can call your doctor's office
 - Leave a message for your doctor if he or she is not free.
 - If someone does not call you back, call again, or ask your support provider to call for you.

Your doctor wants to help you to stay healthy.

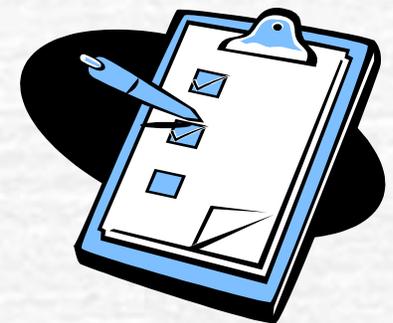


- By preparing for your doctor's appointment and asking important questions, you can make sure that you are receiving the best care.
- If you do not feel comfortable with your health care provider, you can look for another one.
 - You can ask your support provider, a family member, or friend to help you look.

You or your support provider can use this “Ask My Doctor Checklist” to help you prepare for your visit.

- This checklist will remind you about:
 - Information you should bring with you to your appointment
 - Questions you can ask your doctor about medications, tests, and treatments

<http://content.ddssafety.net/DisplayArticle.aspx?StoryID=282>



To learn more about preparing for your doctor's appointment, you can check out these resources!



- National Institutes of Health:
<http://www.nei.nih.gov/health/talktodoc.asp>