



TIPS

for Preparing for a Doctor's Visit

Patients who take an active role in their health care tend to be more effective in managing their health. A little planning before a visit to the doctor will help you more fully understand your diagnosis or treatment plan and allow you to take full advantage of your doctor's expertise. Here are some suggestions for getting the most out of your next doctor's appointment:

- ❑ **Prioritize your concerns.** Before your scheduled visit, think about the purpose of the visit. Does it relate to recent unusual symptoms? Is it a routine maintenance appointment? Are you concerned about the side effects of a new treatment or medication? Prepare a list of questions in order of importance to ensure that all your concerns are addressed.
- ❑ **Be informative.** Gather information about your and your family's medical histories to share with your doctor. Make a list of all the medications you are currently taking to bring to the appointment, including prescription and nonprescription drugs, vitamins, and supplements. Bring your insurance information, and, if you are changing physicians or clinics, remember to have your medical records transferred before the visit.
- ❑ **Ask questions and take notes.** Be attentive and attempt to retain any information the doctor offers. Bring a notepad and jot down any instructions or the doctor's responses to your questions. If you are unclear about something, try repeating what the doctor said in your own words or ask for further explanation to gain clarity.
- ❑ **Be clear and concise.** Think about how to best express your concerns before your visit to ensure that you use the time you have most effectively. If you are concerned about recent symptoms you're experiencing, think about how to most accurately communicate these to your doctor, noting when they occur, what it feels like, their frequency, etc.
- ❑ **Bring an advocate.** Having someone with you at the appointment may help you retain information, as well as make sure that all of your issues are addressed. Inform a friend or family member ahead of time, and let them know your concerns and goals for the appointment.
- ❑ **Keep your doctor updated.** If you are visiting your regular doctor, plan to update him or her about any changes in your health since your last visit. Let him or her know about treatment by other doctors, specialists, or in the emergency room, as well as changes in medications and their effects on you. It is also important to inform your doctor of any major stresses or changes in your life, including changes in appetite, weight, sleep, or energy level.

This page is part of an ongoing series of practical tips for patients with neurologic disorders. If you have compiled clinically relevant tips that you wish to share, please contact the editor at info@neurologyreviews.com.