

Make the Most Out of Your Doctor's Appointment: Ten Tips to Prepare for Your Appointment

Congratulations! By making a doctor's appointment, you are taking a step towards better health. Here are a few things you can do to have an easier visit with your doctor.

- 1) Write down the date and time of your appointment.
- 2) When you make an appointment, ask about any food restrictions on the day of your appointment. Some tests can only be given if you did not eat or drink the day of the test.
- 3) Write down any questions you have for the doctor. Bring this list with you.
- 4) Remember to bring necessary paperwork. If you are not insured, you may need to bring information that shows your income to make sure you are charged (or not charged) the correct amount. Make sure to ask your doctor's office what you need to bring. If you have insurance, remember to bring your insurance card.
- 5) Know your family's health history. New doctors will often ask you about conditions in your family to try to understand your risks for health conditions.
- 6) If you are thinking about starting a new diet or exercise plan, you may want to talk to your doctor about whether this is the best fit for you. If you've read about new recommendations for medical tests, you should also feel free to ask the doctor about how this might affect you.
- 7) Ask a family member or friend that you trust to come with you. If you feel comfortable, talk about the questions you have for the doctor beforehand.
- 8) Bring along a screening chart (check out ours at http://www.milwaukee.gov/screening_checklist_tool_men.pdf) as a reminder for you and your doctor to talk about what tests you might need.
- 9) If you have a specific health concern, you may want to find a doctor who is a specialist around that issue. Some doctors will list this specialty. If you have a regular doctor, you can ask him or her about finding a specialist.
- 10) Be prepared to ask questions about new information. Doctors can sometimes use jargon or technical language that patients aren't familiar with. They sometimes leave the appointment not knowing what to do next and feeling anxious. The Partnership for Clear Health Communication (http://www.npsf.org/askme3/for_patients.php) suggests asking the following questions every time you meet with a health provider:
 - a) What is my main problem?
 - b) What do I need to do?
 - c) Why is it important for me to do this?