

June: Preparing for a Doctor's Appointment

Speak Up

Become a Partner in Your Health Care

Many people go to the doctor ready to just listen and let the doctor take the lead. But the best patient-doctor relationships are partnerships. You and your doctor can work together as a team that includes nurses, physician assistants, and other health care providers to address your medical problems.

Your first step is to find a main doctor (your primary doctor or primary care doctor) that you feel comfortable talking to. Your doctor needs to understand your health concerns and problems. He or she will help you make medical decisions that suit your values and daily habits, and will keep in touch with any other specialists you may need. Make a list in advance of the things you want to discuss. Do you have a new symptom? Are you concerned about how a treatment is affecting your daily life? If you have more than a few items to discuss, put them in order with the most important ones first.

Good communication is key to good health care. Tell your doctor if you have vision or hearing problems so he or she can accommodate you. Some doctors suggest you put all your prescription drugs, over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal remedies or supplements in a bag and bring them with you. You should at least bring a complete list of everything you take. A recent survey found that nearly two-thirds of older Americans use some form of complementary and alternative medicine such as herbal supplements, meditation, homeopathy and acupuncture. Less than one-third of them, however, discuss these practices with their doctors. This news is a cause for concern because your doctor needs to have a full picture of everything you're doing to manage your health. During your visit, make sure to ask questions if anything is unclear to you. Bring up any problems or concerns you might have, whether or not the doctor asks about them. Ask about different treatment options. And don't hesitate to tell the doctor if you have concerns about a particular treatment or change in your daily life. You might also consider bringing a family member or close friend to your appointment with you. Let him or her know in advance what you want from your visit. Your companion can remind you what you planned to discuss with the doctor if you forget, or take notes for you and help you remember what the doctor said.

Take an active role in your own health care. Do everything you can to get the best care possible.

Source: *NIH News in Health*

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http://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2007/May/docs/01features_02.htm

Tips: Getting Started With a New Doctor

Your first meeting is a good time to talk with the doctor and the office staff about some communication basics.

First name or last name—When you see the doctor and office staff, introduce yourself and let them know by what name you like to be called.

Ask how the office runs—Learn what days are busiest and what times are best to call. Ask what to do if there is an emergency, or if you need a doctor when the office is closed.

Share your medical history—Tell the doctor about your illnesses, operations, conditions, and other doctors you see.

Share former doctors' names—Give the new doctor all of your former doctors' names and addresses. This is to help your new doctor get copies of your medical records.

Source: *National Institute on Aging*

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<http://www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/TalkingWithYourDoctor/chapter02.htm>

Do You Know The Right Questions To Ask Your PCP?

Health care providers, the government, and many other groups are working hard to improve health care quality, but improving health care quality is a team effort. You can improve your care and the care of your loved ones by taking an active role in your health care. Ask questions. Understand your condition. Evaluate your options. The following is an example of questions you can ask your health care provider:

1. What is the test for?
2. How many times have you done this procedure?
3. When will I get the results?
4. Why do I need this treatment?
5. Are there any alternatives?
6. What are the possible complications?
7. Which hospital is best for my needs?
8. How do you spell the name of that drug?
9. Are there any side effects?
10. Will this medicine interact with medicines that I'm already taking?

Remember; being an equal partner with your doctor is essential to receiving the best care and understanding your treatment is a collaborative effort. Ask your physician questions! A more comprehensive set of questions you can use when visiting your health care provider can be found at the web address below.

Source: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

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<http://www.ahrq.gov/questionsaretheanswer/questionBuilder.aspx>

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Patient Power: Come Prepared and Take an Active Role in your Doctor's Appointments

By all accounts, Donna Matthews is a “good” patient. As a diabetic, she checks her blood sugar level four to five times a day – and more if she does not feel well. She writes the numbers down in a log that she dutifully presents at each doctor’s appointment. The notion of **patient empowerment**—that patients take an active role in their care—is a growing concept. They weigh treatment options, learn about their illnesses and make decisions about their care. Research has shown that patients who interact with and have a good relationship with their providers not only receive better care but are happier with that care. Internist Dr. Mark Drews’ states “if only all my patients were as good as Donna”. Dr. Lewis, a cardiologist at Brigham and Women’s Hospital believes that the time is better spent if patients come prepared.

During the visit, he expects participation and good interaction from his patients. He encourages questions. And he expects honesty. Hiding information and providing just part of a picture can be detrimental. He welcomes a family member or friend at the visit to help fill in the gaps. For the patient’s part, it takes *three steps* to achieve the ultimate visit. The first is preparation. Don’t go to the doctor empty-handed. Take your drugs with you — including over-the-counter and herbal drugs, and vitamins; write a list of your questions, symptoms and complaints; and prioritize the three or four most troublesome. The American Academy of Family Physicians recommends developing a health journal that includes a history of illnesses and injuries, hospitalizations, surgeries, allergies and drugs.

The second step is the actual visit. Discuss your complaints; update the doctor of any changes since the last visit, including life changes, such as divorce; answer questions honestly; ask questions if you do not understand and write down information.

The third step is follow-up. Call if you experience problems after the visit, such as side effects from medications, deterioration of your symptoms, or failure to receive the results of tests.

Drew stresses “If you and your doctor have a relationship that works, that goes a long way. You don’t have to be friends, but you should feel secure that he or she has your best interest,” he said. “If not, find another doctor.”

Source: Be Healthy: A Banner Publication
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Partnership for Healthcare Excellence

The Partnership For Healthcare Excellence’s strives for all people to be educated, active and engaged health care patients. It offers free resources and information for consumers on various topics including:

- Choosing a Doctor
- Preparing for Your Doctor's Visit
- How to Take Your Medications Safely
- Preventing Infection
- Preparing for your Hospital Stay

It offers free fact sheets that can be downloaded on all the above topics. To view the website copy/paste the link below into your web browser.

Source: http://www.partnershipforhealthcare.org/patients_and_caregivers/

Healthy Recipe: Oatmeal Pecan Waffles

Ingredients:

- 1 cup whole –wheat flour
- 1/2 cup quick-cooking oats
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp sugar
- ¼ cup unsalted pecans, chopped
- 2 large eggs, separated
- 1 ½ cup fat-free (skim) milk
- 1 tbsp vegetable oil

Instructions:

Preheat waffle iron. Combine flour, oats, baking powder, sugar, and pecans in a large bowl. Combine egg yolks, milk, and vegetable oil in a separate bowl, and mix well, Add liquid mixture to the dry ingredients, and stir together. Do not over mix; mixture should be a bit lumpy. Whip eggs to medium peaks. Gently fold egg whites into batter. Pour batter into preheated waffle iron, and cook until the waffle iron light signals it’s done or steam stops coming out of the iron. A waffle is perfect when it’s crisp and well browned on the outside with a moist, light, airy and fluffy inside. Add fresh fruit and a light dusting of powdered sugar to each waffle, and serve.

Nutrition Facts:

Serving Size 3 small (2-inch) or 1 large (6-inch) waffle (depending on waffle iron size). Yield is 4 servings.

Amount Per Serving

Calories 340	Calories from Fat 11g
Cholesterol 107 mg	Sodium 331 mg
Total Carbohydrate 50 g	Fiber 9 g
Potassium 369 mg	Protein 14 g

Source: David Kamen. *Keep the Beat™ Recipes: Deliciously Health Family Meals.*

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI)
NIH Publication No. 10-7531. Page 39.
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