

Communicate Better with Your Doctor

Communication with your doctor is one of the most important tools to ensuring you get the best health care possible.

According to the Baylor College of Medicine, the answer to improving communication might be as simple as **ABC (Ask Questions, Be Prepared, Communicate Concerns and Desires)**.¹

A: Ask Questions

Knowing what questions to ask and when to ask them are an important part of being a smart, proactive patient. When asking a question:

- Make sure you understand the answer
- Take notes on the answer
- Don't be shy about asking for clarification
- Repeat the answer back and point out anything you don't understand
- Bring a friend or family member along to help you ask the right questions

B: Be Prepared

In many cases, it is not possible for a doctor to remember his or her patient's full medical history or current conditions. You can ensure a better doctor's visit by being prepared when you arrive at your appointment.

- **Know your health history** – Use the "Checkup Worksheet" in your Personal Health Packet to write down your personal health history. Print out the worksheet and bring it to your next doctor's visit.
- **Keep track of preventive screenings** – Know when you are due for a preventive health screening. Use the "Screening Worksheet" available in your Personal Health Packet to learn which screenings tests you'll need and when.

C: Communicate Concerns and Desires

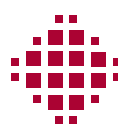
It is important to feel comfortable expressing your concerns and desires with your physician. The following helpful hints address ways you can better communicate your concerns or desires:

- **Find a primary source of care** (a place you regularly go to receive medical treatment) – If this is not possible due to financial or other restrictions, make sure you feel comfortable with the physician you are seeing for the current visit.
- **List your concerns** – Some concerns are more important

to you than others; be sure to make a list so that you talk about them in order of importance to you.

- **Don't be embarrassed** – Many concerns go unanswered because patients are too embarrassed to ask about them. Whether the concern is medical, financial or otherwise, be sure to ask your doctor about it; they are there to help.

¹The Baylor College of Medicine. "How to Talk to Your Doctor." As cited in Downs, Martin F. "Be Your Own Health Advocate," WebMD Feature. Available at: <http://www.webmd.com/healthy-aging/guide/be-your-own-health-advocate?page=1> Accessed: 4/10/07



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