



Consumer Health Decisions # 6

Making the Most of Your Health Care Visit

Your time with your health care provider is limited. These steps will help you make the most of those precious minutes.

- √ Be prepared – bring along records and put in writing your symptoms, concerns and questions.
- √ Start with your major concern first – it will help your provider focus on what is most important to you.
- √ Be specific about symptoms – write down details about your symptoms; location, degree of pain, when they occur and what things make symptoms better or worse.
- √ Share information honestly – be up front about your symptoms, home remedies you are using, health behaviors such as smoking and drinking, and treatments from other health care providers.
- √ Speak up – health care is a partnership. You know you best! Voice concerns you have about anything your health care provider is discussing with you.
- √ Ask questions – ask for more information, clarification or explanation of your condition. Ask about follow up and treatment options.
- √ Bring your medications – including all prescriptions, over the counter medications, vitamin supplements or herbal remedies you are taking. Bring the containers or write a detailed list including dosages.
- √ Work together to develop an effective treatment plan. The plan developed by provider and patient should be realistic. Consider what you are willing to do and take into account the costs, benefits and risks.
- √ Know what to do when you leave. Consider taking notes during your appointment, have someone come with you to help you remember what was said or have your doctor write down main points. Ask about referrals to other providers to help you meet your goals.

Discussion Questions and Activities:

- What is your impression of health care providers – busy people I can't bother, superior to me, someone just like me, a vendor of services? How does this affect how I deal with my health care provider?
- Are you comfortable asking questions or sharing potentially embarrassing things with your doctor?
- When you feel you have a need that is not being met are you comfortable pursuing it with your health care provider?