

What you need to know about advocating for your health

Appointments with healthcare professionals can be short, so you need to be ready to give and get health information. Use this sheet to become an active partner in your health care.



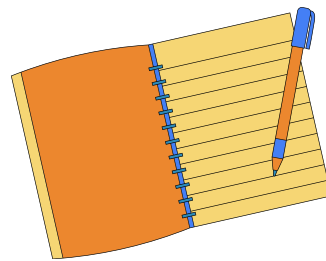
Who are the different health care providers or professionals I can see?

There are different types of health care providers and professionals you can see to get the care you need, including:



Medical doctors and nurse practitioners

who can help with physical injuries and illnesses, such as a broken wrist or coughing



Therapists

who can help talk and work through emotional problems and feelings such as anxiety or depression



Psychiatrists

who can help with mental illness, such as depression or bipolar disorder, and can give medicine to treat it

How can I make the most of my appointment with a healthcare provider?

1

Prepare for your appointment

2

Check in with reception when you arrive

3

Talk openly with the healthcare provider

4

Follow through with the plan



Use the tips on the next page for your appointments.

1 Prepare for your appointment



Make a list of what you want to talk about, including any concerns or symptoms you have, and how long you've had them



Write down your health habits and history, including whether you smoke, how much you drink, any drugs you may use, any health conditions you have, medicines you take, and family health history

Practice what you'll say



If a topic feels embarrassing to talk about, such as your bowel movements (poop) or sexual activity, practice talking about it before you go to your doctor

3 Talk openly with the provider



Ask your doctor any questions you have, starting with the ones that are most important to you, and write the answers down



Be honest and provide details, including things about your lifestyle like how active you are or how often you consume alcohol, marijuana, or other drugs, as well as your feelings, emotions, and symptoms. Ask questions if you don't understand

Make sure you understand



Explain what the provider said to you in your own words. You can say something like, "I think what you're saying is... is that right?" or "I want to make sure I understand... did I get that right?"

2 Check in when you arrive



Have your ID, insurance card, and copay (if you have one) ready when you walk up to the reception desk to check in



Read and fill out any papers given to you, which may include a HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) or privacy form, emergency contact, and medical history

Ask about a patient portal



Ask if the healthcare provider you are seeing uses a patient portal to communicate with patients, and if so, how you can sign up

4 Follow through with the plan



Follow the plan you made with the provider, like getting medicine at the pharmacy or scheduling an appointment with another provider



If you need to, schedule a follow-up appointment with that provider

Call your health care provider if you:



- Have any side effects after taking a medicine
- Have symptoms that get worse
- Have worsening feelings of depression, anxiety or suicidal thoughts
- Haven't gotten results of a test you've had – don't assume no news is good news
- Don't understand your test results

Frequently asked questions:

Q

Why is it important to be honest with my provider?

A

If your provider doesn't know everything that is going on, they may not be able to fully help.

Q

What if I'm worried about the cost of the appointment or treatment?

A

If you're worried, call ahead and ask about the cost of appointment and ask what payment options are available.

Q

What if I don't understand something the provider says?

A

If you don't understand something, ask the provider to re-explain in a different way.

Q

What is a patient portal?

A

A secure, online account that you can use to access your medical records, make appointments, and contact your provider.



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Notes

Use this page to write down questions before your appointment. During the appointment, write down answers and any other notes you want to remember.

