

How to get the most out of your visit to the doctor

Your doctor works hard to make sure that you receive the best possible care. But did you know that you play an important role in the quality of your own medical care? There are many things you can do to make sure that you and your doctor both have all of the information needed for the highest quality care. This checklist outlines important questions you should ask your doctor and actions you can take. Following these simple suggestions will help to ensure that you receive quality care.

1 Step 1: Don't be afraid to ask questions.

You may find it helpful to bring a friend or family member with you to take notes, or for emotional support.

Make sure you understand what your doctor is trying to tell you. Ask the following:

- What is the name of my condition (also called a diagnosis)?
- What treatment are you recommending and why?
- What are my treatment options?
- If this is a long-term problem, what can I expect in the future (the prognosis)?

2 Step 2: Keep an accurate medical history

Keep a card in your wallet with important personal medical information.

A free card is available on the internet to help you organize this information. Visit www.jointcommission.org/, click on "Speak Up" in the menu on the left, and then select "Download My Medication List Expanded Wallet Card (PDF)".

- List all the medicines you take (including vitamins and herbal supplements).
- List any allergies you have, especially allergies to medicines.
- Bring this list with you to each appointment.

3 Step 3: Understand how to take all prescribed medication

Ask your doctor the purpose of the medication prescribed, how often to take it and for how long, and any possible side effects it may have.

Repeat back the directions to the doctor or pharmacist to make sure you understand them.

Ask your pharmacist about any reactions the medication may have with others you are taking.

Read the labels to make sure you receive the correct medication.

Become familiar with what the medication looks like.

4 Step 4: Understand your test results

Ask your doctor when and how you should expect to receive your test results.

Ask who will look at the results.

Write down who to contact, and how to contact them, if you don't get your test results when the doctor tells you to expect them.

5 Step 5: Be prepared for surgery

If your doctor recommends surgery, there are some more questions you will want to ask.

Understand why your doctor is recommending surgery

Are there options other than surgery that can treat my condition?

Where can I get more information about the surgery?

You have the right to get a second opinion from another doctor before you make your final decision about going ahead with surgery. Ask your doctor how to go about doing this.

Enter surgery knowing what to expect

What will happen during surgery?

Is there more than one way the surgery may be performed? Does one way involve less time off from work, recovery time, or pain than others?

Who will perform the surgery?

Is the surgeon board certified?

Where will the surgery be performed?

Is information available about the quality of care in the hospital or outpatient surgery center where the procedure will take place?

If so, where can I get this information?

How long will the surgery take?

What is my expected hospital stay/recovery time?

You CAN make a difference in the quality of care that you receive. Remember to ask questions, keep an accurate medical history, understand how to take medications, what your test results mean, and what to expect if you're undergoing surgery. Start by making yourself these promises today.



Working for the Best Ear, Nose, and Throat Care