How to make the most of your doctor visits

Have you ever walked out of a doctor's office and forgot to ask a question about a symptom you've been having, or brought home a new medication and couldn’t remember if you were supposed to take it with a meal? A little preparation before your next visit can help ensure that you’re getting the most out of your doctor visits, and that you’re being an active participant in your health – saving you time, money and worry. You can get more from your doctor visits by following these tips.

Before you go…

• Choose the right doctor. Check if your provider is in your health plan's network, how long it takes to get an appointment, and if they’re available after hours.

• Create a list of questions you want answered. Prioritize the list to ensure you ask the most important questions first.

• Bring a record of your prescriptions, over-the-counter medications and supplements you take regularly, as well as the names and contact information of other doctors you see.

• Ask someone to go with you to take notes or to be a second set of ears.

While at the visit…

• Be open and honest. Sometimes it can feel awkward to discuss certain things with your doctor. Being truthful and forthcoming can help your doctor better assess your needs.

• Share your history. Your personal and family health history may offer the doctor insight into how to manage your care.

• Get the details about tests, procedures and treatments. Ask about side effects and when to expect test results.

Strengthen your resilience through self-care

What have you done to take care of yourself today? When asked this question, most people have to think long and hard prior to answering. Family, work and other obligations may cause you to put your needs behind everyone else's. You may find this often leaves you stressed, overwhelmed and exhausted. Putting others before yourself is a threat to resilience, well-being and even your overall health. Practicing self-care is one of the fundamentals of resilience. Try some of the activities below to practice self-care!

Stay on top of preventive care – This includes regular physical exams, vaccines, blood pressure checks, and more.

Get medical care when you need it – If you’re sick, injured, or experiencing pain or symptoms that may require medical intervention, it is important that you don’t put off getting care.

Exercise – Regular physical activity is necessary for good physical health. Aim to get at least 150 minutes of moderate or 75 minutes of vigorous activity each week.

Eat healthy – Good nutrition is also necessary for physical health. Be sure to nourish your body with healthy foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean sources of protein and healthy fats.
Build communication skills; improve social connections

Whether you want to improve your connection with your spouse, kids, boss, coworkers, friends, family or neighbors, using positive communication skills can build greater respect, improve teamwork and problem-solving, and support your overall social and emotional health. Especially in situations where differing viewpoints may surface, using good communication skills requires more than just getting your point across—it’s about being a good listener, managing your emotions, asserting yourself in a respectful way and paying attention to nonverbal communication. Try putting these basic skills into practice:

Don’t rush to judgment. Is your teen talking about changing her curfew? Or what foods he or she prefers to eat? Be willing to think about what the person is saying and show that you are taking what’s been said seriously.

Check your tone and body language. Notice if you sound calm and pleased or urgent, hesitant, angry, or belligerent, for example. Or perhaps you are avoiding eye contact, crossing your arms, fidgeting, or leaning too close to the other person. If so, you may not be sending an effective message.

Use tactics to remain calm if you’re feeling overwhelmed. Are your “emotional buttons” being pushed during the conversation? If so, it’s important to use some stalling strategies to give yourself time to think before you rush to respond.

When you’re angry, limit your discussion. Be willing to take time-outs, walk away, or engage in activities that help cool your temper before you engage in discussions that might become even more heated.

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