

Making the Most of Your Office Visit

Taken from a presentation by Catherine Bannerman, M.D.
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1. YOU NEED TO LIKE YOUR DOCTOR!

- It's an intimate and hopefully long-standing relationship. You should be able to look forward to seeing him/her.
- Dress, style, body language, communication skills.
- Respect. Ask to be called Mr. or Mrs. if you would prefer. The doctor won't know unless you say so.
- Comfort. Are you comfortable asking questions?
- Time. The first appointments of the day are the most likely to be on time. You should be given an update or estimate if the MD is running late. Ask, if you're not told. Remember, in a busy office, people can be forgotten!

2. MEDICATIONS

- Bring all medications to every visit. This avoids "the little pink pill" problem, and duplication from different MD's.
- Avoid taking too many. Ask if you can stop any. Make sure your MD is up to date with your meds.
- Doctors usually don't know how much medications cost. Tell them, but don't get mad at them!

3. THE LIST

- Make a list of problems and issues, but give it to the MD up front so he /she can prioritize them. What you may have put at the bottom of the list thinking it was trivial, may turn out to be the most significant medical issue.
- Be sure to tell the MD what is most important to you also.

4. NOW WHAT or FOLLOW UP

- Make sure follow up issues are clear before you leave. When should you come back? How are lab results going to be communicated? Who's supposed to call whom, you or the MD?
- If you are supposed to call, whom are you supposed to talk to?

5. CONFIDENTIALITY

- The MD has a confidential relationship with his/her patient. It's O.K. to accompany someone to the office, but probably not O.K. to phone and ask for confidential information afterwards -- unless the patient has given the MD permission to do so.
- Designate an "information gather/spokesperson" for the family. It's confusing (and annoying) for the MD to get several different calls from different family members.