



Family Health Care Tips

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Teen Scene: Communicating with Doctors or Health Care Providers

Parents Reaching Out provides resources that focus on helping families make informed decisions about the care and education of their children. Keeping your family healthy means knowing how to navigate the health care system and talk with your doctor or other providers. We hope these tip sheets will give you the information you may need to access the best, most cost-effective medical and related services to meet the needs of your family.

Talking to doctors and other health care providers can be difficult, overwhelming and, at times, scary. The skill of learning how to talk to your doctor is a very important part of growing up and becoming more independent.

What advice would give someone going to the doctor? Here are some tips that were suggested by adolescents in the Making Healthy Connections program to help parents and teens as they communicate with health care providers.



- Make sure to ask for a long enough appointment. Sometimes appointments are very rushed. If you know that you will have a lot to talk about with you doctor, ask for an extended appointment so you don't run out of time.
- Tell your doctor everything you can about yourself. For example: what you did or how you fell. The more information the doctor has, the more helpful he/she can be.
- Bring a list of questions and concerns. It's easy to forget things when you're sitting in the doctor's office. A written list of questions, concerns, or other things you want to make sure to tell the doctor will help you remember everything that's been on your mind.
- Say what you think and be honest.
- Tell the doctor to be honest and tell you everything. You are entitled to know all about your condition, your treatment, and any options that might be available to you.
- Be assertive. Be nice, but persistent.
- Ask questions. Remember-there is no such thing as a stupid question. If you don't understand an answer to a question, ask the doctor to explain it again until you do understand it.
- Write down what the doctor says. That will help you remember later on.



- Bring someone with you, if you'd like. Sometimes it helps to have someone else there for support, to hear what the doctor has to say, or to ask questions that you might not think of during your visit.
- If you like, ask your parents to wait outside the exam room so you have some time alone to talk to the doctor. Sometimes that helps the doctor focus on you and what you have to say. Your parents can come back in after you've had a chance to talk to the doctor yourself. Then they can ask their questions.
- If you need help, ask for it.
- When visiting a new doctor for, ask the doctor about his/her background and experience.
- Even if you have seen your doctor for a long time, it is ok to ask about the doctor's background and what his/her experience has been.
- Call back if you have questions after the appointment. Sometimes questions come up after you get home, or you forget something the doctor said. It's okay to call and follow up with more questions.
- Learn about your insurance coverage. What services are covered and what procedures do you have to follow to get those services?



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