

Making the Most of Visits with Your Doctor

To make the most of visits with your doctor, organize your information and questions before going to their office or joining a telehealth visit. Here are some helpful tips.

Organize Your Health Information

- You may choose to use a computer/smart phone app called MyChart to keep your medical appointments, test results, medicines and medical history organized. MyChart is a free service available to you. You can log in using any up-to-date internet browser or by downloading the Ohio State myHealth app. MyChart lets you send and receive messages securely with your health care team and manage your health information and appointments. To sign up, ask for a MyChart activation code at your next doctor's appointment and then visit <https://mychart.osu.edu/osumc/> or the myHealth app. Click on "Create Your Account" and use your code to log in to create a username and password. After you create your account, MyChart will email you when you have messages or to remind you of upcoming appointments. For help with MyHealth or MyChart, you may call 614-366-6975.
- You may wish to keep health information in a notebook, folder or file. If you are seeing a new doctor, you should take this information with you to your appointment.
- Keep notes about your personal health history, including the dates, for the following:
 - ▶ Your past and present health problems and illnesses
 - ▶ Any pregnancies including if you are currently pregnant, planning on becoming pregnant or are breastfeeding

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

- ▶ Any surgeries, dental work or procedures, including the date and name of the doctor who provided the service
- ▶ Tests and the results, if known (ask for copies of your tests and lab reports for your records)
- ▶ Any allergies (such as to medicine, food or the environment)
- ▶ Date and type of vaccines that you have received
- ▶ Your medicines
- ▶ Health information about your parents, grandparents or siblings, if known

Preparing for Your Visit

- Write down any questions you have for your doctor or any member of your health care team.
 - ▶ Underline or highlight the questions that you want to make sure are answered.
 - ▶ Some examples of questions you may want to ask:
 - What is my diagnosis/condition called?
 - How serious is this diagnosis/condition?
 - What are my treatment choices?
 - What treatment do you think is best for me and why?
 - What are the benefits and risks of these treatments?
 - When will the treatment start? When will it end?
 - Will I be in the hospital for my treatment?
 - How will I feel during and after treatment? How long could I feel this way?
 - Will there be long-term effects from the treatment?
- Write down any symptoms or problems, especially any new symptoms you have had since your last visit. For example:
 - ▶ If you have headaches, tell when you get them, how long they last, if you get dizzy, what makes them better or worse, what you have done to treat the problem and if it has worked.

- ▶ If you have pain, tell where it is located, how it feels (burning, cramping, aching, dull, stinging or sharp) and if it prevents you from doing your normal activities.
- ▶ Share information from recent appointments with medical specialists. Include changes in your medicine or treatment that may have taken place after a trip to an urgent care or the emergency department.
- Keep a list of all the medicines you are taking, including:
 - ▶ Medicines prescribed by any of your doctors
 - ▶ Herbs or dietary supplements
 - ▶ Vitamins
 - ▶ Creams, inhalers and eye drops
 - ▶ Over-the-counter medicines
 - ▶ Street drugs that you are currently using or have used in the past
- Write down the following information about each medicine:
 - ▶ The name of the medicine
 - ▶ The name of the doctor who ordered this medicine
 - ▶ When the medicine was started
 - ▶ How much you take and how often you take it
 - ▶ When you take it
 - ▶ Why you take it
- Be prepared to bring in all of your medicines (in the original containers) so your doctor can review them with you at your visit. Tell your doctor if any medicine is causing side effects or if you have any problems taking the medicine as directed.
- Tell your doctor's office or clinic (before your appointment if possible) if you do not read, speak or understand spoken English. They can arrange for someone who speaks your language, called an interpreter, to help at your office visit. An interpreter may come in person to your appointment or talk to you over the telephone or video screen.

- Ask a family member or friend to come with you to the visit. This person can listen and take notes while you are talking to the doctor or other members of your health care team.
- If a family member or friend is unable to come with you to the appointment, they can join the visit as a “virtual companion” over the phone or on video using FaceTime, Zoom or Updox. Once you are taken to the exam room, you will be asked to connect with your virtual companion. It is important for your virtual companion to be in a quiet place without distractions, so they can listen, ask questions and take notes during your visit.

Things to Bring

- Insurance information
- Photo I.D., such as your driver’s license
- Your list of questions
- Your list of medicines
- Glasses or hearing aids, if needed

During Your Visit

- Share the list of questions or problems you have prepared with your doctor or other members of your health care team.
- Ask questions until you understand what you want to know about your condition, treatment and medicines.
- Ask your health care team to explain anything you do not understand. It is important for you to know what has been said, so you can take care of yourself to feel your best. It is helpful for you to repeat back any instructions to make sure you understand them clearly.
- **Make sure that you:**
 - ▶ Ask for written instructions or make your own notes about how to care for yourself (such as changes in your diet or activity level, special treatments and any equipment or supplies you may need). If you have problems reading written material let your health care team know so they can use other ways to give you needed information.

- ▶ Understand the medicine you need to take, including how much you should take, the time of day you should take it and for how many days.
- ▶ Ask about any side effects you should watch for and what you should do if these happen.
- ▶ Know who to call if you have more questions or need help.
- ▶ Talk with your doctor or a member of your health care team if you do not feel comfortable with the proposed plan of care due to your culture or religion. Tell your health care team about your beliefs and cultural needs, so they can work with you to find a way to meet your health care needs while respecting your values.

Telehealth Visits

- You will be sent information through email or MyChart on how to prepare for your telehealth visit.
- During your telehealth visit go to a quiet place where you will not be disturbed and can easily talk with your doctor.
- If a video link is part of your visit, chose a place that is well lit, but does not have a bright light or sunlight behind you. This will help your doctor to be able to see you better during your visit.
- Make sure any cell phone that is being used is charged and your location has a strong internet signal.

Things to Know

- People respond to treatments or medicines differently.
- It is important to let your health care team know if you have an Advance Directive (such as a Living Will or Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care), so they can honor your health care choices. If you would like to get an Advance Directive ask your doctor or other member of your health care team for more information.
- You have choices. You may get a second opinion. You may ask about changing your treatment plan. You can choose to have a different doctor.

- It is important to ask your doctor for refills on your prescriptions at each appointment. If that is not possible, be sure to let them know of your need for a refill several days before your medicine will be gone.
- Let your doctor or health care team members know if you have financial problems that may make it hard for you to follow their instructions. This may include having trouble filling prescriptions, scheduling tests or making follow-up appointments. They may be able to make changes to a part of your plan of care or find resources to help.
- It is helpful if you can schedule your next appointment at the end of each office or clinic visit. Be sure to mark your appointments on a calendar as a reminder.

For more information on Talking with Your Health Care Team, we encourage you to visit our video library at <http://cancer.osu.edu/patientedvideos>.