

Diseases of the Ears, Nose and Throat, Inc.

Otologic Surgery • Head and Neck Surgery • Endoscopic Sinus Surgery • Pediatric Surgery
Complete Audiologic Services • Dizziness and Balance Therapy

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Making the Most of Visits with Your Doctor

Talking with a doctor or health care professional is stressful for most people. It is a good idea to organize your information and questions before your visit. Here are some suggestions that will help you make the most of any medical care visit.

Preparing for the Visit:

- Write down questions before you plan to see your doctor. Underline or highlight the major problems you want to talk about. Keep this information organized in a folder or notebook
- Try to be specific when describing your symptoms or problems. Notes may help you. For example, if you have dizziness, tell the doctor when it started, how often it happens, how long it lasts etc.
- Bring along information and dates about your personal health history. This could include procedures, tests, surgeries, medicines and health conditions.
- Come ready to talk about all remedies you use for your health or to control an illness. Your health care professionals need to know about all treatments you use including vitamins, supplements, herbal remedies and other non-prescription medicines.
- Most doctor visits are 10 to 15 minutes long. This means you will need to be organized to ask questions that you want to know.
- Bring a friend or family member to help listen and take notes. It is easy to forget much of what is talked about during an office visit. This is often true if information is given that was not expected.
- Bring something along to do during waiting time. Make a plan for your absence from work or home in case you have an unexpected delay.
- Bring a list of all the medicines you are taking (prescription and over the counter).
- Ask for copies of recent scans and reports you have had, and bring them along.

During the Visit:

- Don't be embarrassed to ask your doctor to explain medical words in simple terms until you are sure you understand. Pictures may help to make ideas clearer.
- Ask questions such as:
 - What signs should I watch for?
 - How can I help myself?
 - What are the side effects of treatment?
 - What may I expect in the future?
 - How might this affect my ability to?
- Repeat anything that has been said to help you remember.
- Make certain that you:
 - Understand what you are to do at home. Get written instructions if needed.
 - Know what medicines you need to take, and how and when to take them.
 - Remember to ask the doctor to give you prescriptions for your medicines.
 - Find out if there are changes in activity that you should do.
- Be assertive, not aggressive, about asking questions. If the discussion gets off the topic, bring it back to your concerns. If the doctor is called out of the room while you are talking, remind him or her of what you were talking about. For example, "just before the interruption, we were talking about a problem I am having with..."

Points to Consider:

- Remember that there are some questions that your doctor cannot answer. There are unknowns.
- As a patient, you have choices. You may get a second opinion. You may ask about changing your treatment plan. If you and the doctor cannot communicate well, you may change to a different doctor.