

Be More Involved in Your Health Care: Tips for Patients



Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
Advancing Excellence in Health Care • www.ahrq.gov



This brochure gives you tips to use before, during, and after your medical appointment to make sure you get the best possible care.

One way you can make sure you get good quality health care is to be an active member of your health care team.

Patients who talk with their doctors tend to be happier with their care and have better medical results.

Before Your Appointment

- Bring all the medicines you take to your appointment. This includes—
 - Prescription medicines
 - Non-prescription medicines, such as aspirin or antacids
 - Vitamins
 - Dietary or herbal supplements
- Write down the questions you have for the visit. Use the back of this brochure to list your questions.
- Know your current medical conditions, past surgeries, and illnesses.

*The term “doctor” is used in this booklet to refer to the person who helps you manage your health care.



During Your Appointment

- Explain your symptoms, health history, and any problems with medicines you have taken in the past.
- Ask questions to make sure you understand what your doctor is telling you.
- Let your doctor know if you are worried about being able to follow his or her instructions.
- If your doctor recommends a treatment, ask about options.
- If you need a test, ask—
 - How the test is done
 - How it will feel
 - What you need to do to get ready for it
 - How you will get the results
- If you need a prescription, tell your doctor if you are pregnant, are nursing, have reactions to medicines, or take vitamins or herbal supplements.
- Find out what to do next. Ask for—
 - Written instructions
 - Brochures
 - Videos
 - Web sites

After Your Appointment

- Always follow your doctor's instructions.
- If you do not understand your instructions after you get home, call your doctor.
- Talk with your doctor or pharmacist before you stop taking any medicines that your doctor prescribed.
- Call your doctor if your symptoms get worse or if you have problems following the instructions.
- Make appointments to have tests done or see a specialist if you need to.
- Call your doctor's office to find out test results. Ask what you should do about the results.



Free Tools

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), an agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, supports research that helps people make informed decisions and improves the quality of health care.

AHRQ offers these free resources to help you make decisions about your health care:



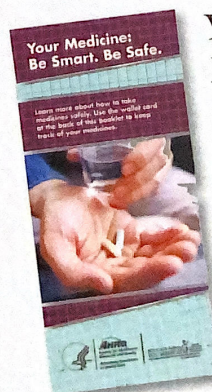
- Questions are the Answer:
ahrq.gov/questions

This Web site lets you make a list of questions that you can bring to your medical appointments and gives you tips on talking with your doctor.



- Consumers & Patients:
ahrq.gov/consumer

This Web page gives information on staying healthy; getting safe, high-quality health care; and more.



Your Medicine: Be Smart.
Be Safe.

This booklet answers common questions about getting and taking medicines and has a wallet card to help you keep track of your medicines. Order a free copy by calling 1-800-358-9295.

My Questions for This Visit

You might have questions about:

- Your medicines
- A medical test you need
- A surgery you need

What are the top three questions you want to be sure to ask during your appointment? List them here:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____
