

Why is Effective Communication with Your Physician Important?

Research on communication has shown that when physicians and patients communicate effectively, the patients' health outcome is improved.

There are several things you can do to help improve communication between you and your physician.



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Use this space for Notes

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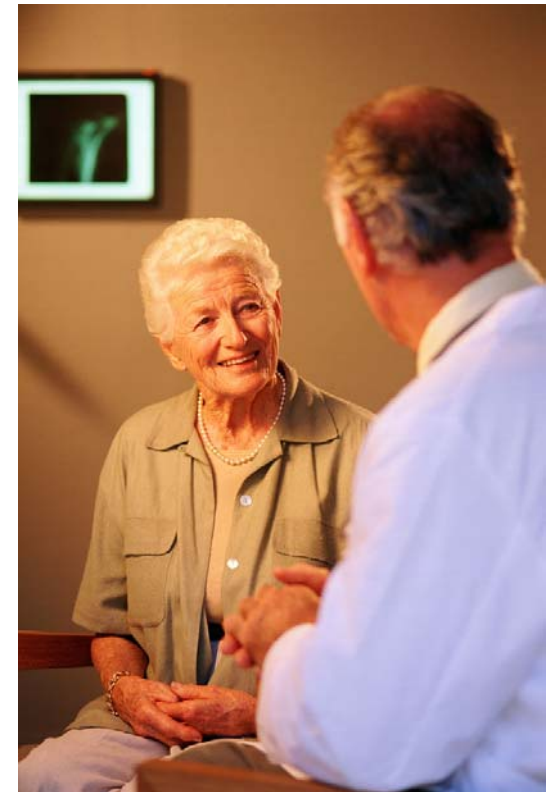


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Senior to Senior

Suggestions for improving communication between you and your doctor

This brochure contains **tips** and **techniques** other seniors use to help them better communicate with their physician.



Before Your Appointment

- ✓ Create a list of questions to ask your physician

"Bring a list of questions before you see a doctor. If you have any questions write them down because usually the doctor only has a few minutes to spend with you, so that's my strategy before I even go in to see the doctor."

- ✓ Make plans to take someone with you to the appointment

"It may be a good idea to have someone go along with you to the doctor - wife, husband, sister, brother, maybe someone young, especially in serious situations... rather than going in by yourself."

- ✓ Bring any communication aids, such as glasses or hearing aids, with you to the appointment

"Making sure you take your glasses with you is number one.

You should check your hearing aids. Maybe they need batteries or something ... make sure they are working properly"

During Your Appointment

- ✓ Ask the physician to write out medical instructions

"... have the doctor write out medical instructions for you"

- ✓ Ask the physician to repeat or clarify anything you are unsure of

"Ask for them to repeat any instructions to make sure that you've got the instructions correct, to reinforce what you think you heard because sometimes you miss something in communication... you need to ask for the doctor to repeat it at least one more time before exiting the office"

"You should have them read it with you or to you and explain every word that you don't understand about it... if I read it and didn't understand what any line of it meant I would definitely ask questions..."

- ✓ Inform the physician of communication problems while they are occurring

"...talk with the physician and let him know you've had problems before. Ask, "What can I do to prevent this?" and maybe the two of you can come up with some solutions."

After Your Appointment

- ✓ Write out medical reminders and post them where you know you will see them

"You should keep a calendar and write the information on it and post it maybe in your bathroom so that when you go in you can see the information you need to be reminded of..."

"... write it down, big letters, put it on the Frigidaire [refrigerator] so you could see it all times."

- ✓ Call your physician if you have any questions about your medical instructions

"Don't hesitate to call back to the doctor's office... if I get home and don't understand what I'm supposed to do or what I understood, then I call the doctor's office."

- ✓ Share what you and your physician discussed with a spouse, family member or friend

"...share this information with an interested or loving person you have a loving relationship with...share it with a neighbor, a friend, or a caretaker."