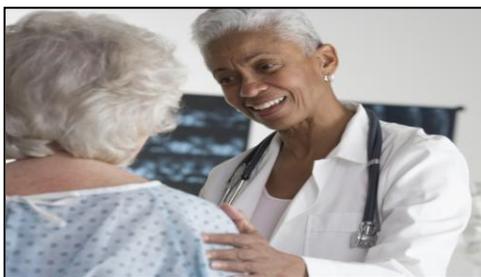


## Talking With Your Doctor



How well do you communicate with your doctor? The patient/doctor relationship should be treated as a partnership where you and your primary care physician or the main doctor you see on a regular basis share information about your health.

Actively talking to your doctor includes listening, asking questions when you don't understand, inquiring about alternative treatments, and being open and honest about your symptoms. Often times, talking with the doctor for older adults can be challenging. Listed below are a few tips from the AARP organization to help make your doctor visit more effective.

### ~ Be Prepared

- From visit to visit, keep a pad and pencil in a designated place to record questions for your next doctor's visit. Retrieve the list before the visit, make the needed additions and place it with other items, such as your insurance card or other cards you may need for completing or updating any forms when you arrive. Also, bring a pad and pen for note taking if needed.

- Bring a list of all medications, including vitamins and supplements you are taking along with the dosages and how often you are taking them. Better yet, you may select to bring all medications with you in a ziplock bag just to make sure you do not incorrectly record information.

- Being prepared also means having essential papers such as your health care advance directive in your file. This document outlines the instructions for your care if you become unable to speak for yourself.

### ~ Speak Up For Yourself

- If you don't understand everything the doctor tells you, ask questions. Request that he or she draw a picture if this will help illustrate and communicate the message more clearly.

- Suggested questions for the doctor could include inquiries about the problem itself, tests the doctor may order, side effects of treatments, medications prescribed, and follow-up visits that may require a specialist.

- Feel free to ask the doctor if there are other treatment options that might be considered. If so, what are the pros and cons of the different alternatives? Remember, if you have doubts, there is nothing wrong with seeing another doctor to get a second opinion - if not an absolute, immediate emergency take the time to consult with another physician.

### ~ Don't Withhold Information

- Your doctor needs to know everything that is going on with your body and health. This conversation should include information about your physical as well as your mental health.

### ~ Bring Someone With You

- Many times, a friend or family member can provide much needed moral support. Don't hesitate to ask for help when planning your doctor visit.

### ~ Follow Up

- Perhaps you completed your visit, returned home and feel nervous, rushed, or overwhelmed, and remember you have another question that you forgot to ask that truly needs an answer. Contact the doctor's office, relate the problem, and ask for the doctor to return the call. He or she will determine if you should come back for a follow-up visit.

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Source: "Checkups and Prevention: How to Talk To Your Doctor?"  
[www.aarp.org/health/healthyliving/articles/talkdr.html](http://www.aarp.org/health/healthyliving/articles/talkdr.html)

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