

MedicineNet.com
How to Help Your Doctor
Easy Steps to Improve Your Medical Care

This Guide produced by the doctors of MedicineNet.com. Please pass this along to your friends and family.
Reviewed: September 16, 2004



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From the Doctors of MedicineNet.com

By Doctors, For You

The health and medical content presented here was produced entirely by physicians. But it is not just for physicians, nurses or allied health professionals. It was designed to be of use to everyone concerned about health -- their health and/or the health of those that matter to them. The fact that the content is doctor-produced by MedicineNet.com ensures an unusual degree of professional expertise, reliability, and perspective that is sensitive to the needs of people facing health issues.

Medicine is a field that is advancing rapidly on many fronts and its language is continually evolving. In today's health industry, there is constant communication between and among both consumers and providers of healthcare. There is consequently a particular need for contemporary medical and health content of high quality.

In the modern day complex healthcare environment, patients, their physicians, nurses, and allied health professionals must be able to discuss the ever-changing aspects of health, disease, and biotechnology. An accurate understanding of medical terminology can assist communication and improve care for patients, as well as help to alleviate the concerns of families and friends.

We hope that you will find this content a valuable addition to your library. This information is current as of the print date. We invite you to visit us on the Internet at <http://www.medicinenet.com> for updates.

Sincerely,

-- The Medical Editors, MedicineNet.com

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For more health and medical information please visit:
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How to Help Your Doctor

During the past decade, we have witnessed unprecedented advances in medical knowledge and technology. Many new medications are becoming available for both the treatment and prevention of diseases. Newly developed tests are not only more accurate, but are also quicker and more tolerable than the older techniques. Some conditions that formerly required major surgeries and prolonged hospitalizations are being corrected by minimally invasive procedures with an overnight hospital stay. This exciting pace of medical innovations shows no sign of letting up.

Meanwhile, many doctors and patients alike are disenchanted with the healthcare delivery system in our country. Doctors are frustrated by the regulatory burden and frequently complain that their time to care for their patients is limited. Additionally, many patients feel that they are not receiving the timely and quality care they deserve.

We recommend that you print these pages out and discuss these questions with your doctor.

How Can I Help My Doctor?

You can help your doctor by organizing your medical history prior to your doctor's visit. Here is how:

1. Pay attention to your symptom(s). What is the location, duration, and character of the discomfort? What brings them on? What aggravates them? What relieves them?
2. List all your medications and dosing schedules. Include all prescription and nonprescription medications, supplements, vitamins, herbs, and minerals. You might bring them with you to show your doctor. That way, if there are questions about the dosing, there is no confusion.
3. List prior and current medical conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart attacks, or cancers.
4. List prior surgeries (appendectomy, hysterectomy, knee replacement, etc.), procedures (colonoscopy, mammography, upper GI x-rays, etc.), and hospitalizations. Bring any hospitalization records and procedure reports in your possession.

What Questions to Ask My Doctor?

1. What do you think is causing my problem?
2. Is there more than one condition (disease) that could be causing my problem?
3. What tests will you do to diagnose my problem and which of the underlying conditions is present?
4. How accurate are the tests for diagnosing the problem and the conditions?
5. How safe are the tests?
6. What is the likely course of this condition? What is the long-term outlook with and without treatment?
7. What are my treatment options? How effective is each treatment option? What are the benefits versus the risks of each treatment option?
8. If my symptoms worsen, what should I do on my own? When should I contact you?
9. Are you aware of each of the medications that I am taking? Can they adversely interact with the medications you are prescribing for me?
10. Should we monitor for side effects of the medications that you are prescribing or for their interactions with other medications I am taking?

How About Follow-up Care?

Arriving at an accurate diagnosis and optimal treatment often takes time and may require repeated visits and tests. Be patient and communicate with your doctor. Here are some suggestions:

1. Do not stop prescribed medications on your own, even if your symptoms have resolved. If your prescription runs out, ask your doctor whether you should obtain a refill.
2. If the prescribed treatment is not helping you, or is causing side effects, inform your doctor right away. He/she may have to rethink the diagnosis and/or change the treatment.
3. If the doctor cannot offer you a firm diagnosis or help you with your symptoms despite repeated visits, it is OK to ask for another opinion. Most doctors will be glad to help their patients solicit second opinions or specialty consultations.
4. Always ask your doctor about your test results. Never assume that everything must be fine if you do not hear from the doctor's office.
5. Inform your doctor if you are using alternative medicine or non-prescription remedies because some of these remedies may interact with your prescribed medications.
6. Educate yourself with credible and authoritative medical information. Increasing your own knowledge about the characteristics of your particular condition, your medications, and their side effects can benefit you, your family, and your doctor. Information about your condition may be provided by your doctor. You can also find valuable information on the Internet. Be certain to look for credible Web sites.

Surgery Questions to Ask Your Surgeon

1. **What is the operation (procedure) that is recommended?**
Ask your surgeon for a simplified explanation of the type of operation, technique used, and why it should be performed. (Pictures and drawings tell patients and family a great deal.)
2. **What is the surgeon's experience with this procedure?**
Ask the surgeon about his experience with this procedure, its outcome, and the hospital or setting in which the operation will be performed.
3. **What is the reason that this procedure is necessary at this time?**
Is the procedure being done to relieve pain, diagnose a condition, correct deformity, for cosmetic reasons, or what exact purposes?
4. **What are the options if this procedure is not done?**
What are the nonsurgical or medical treatments available to help the condition? What will/might happen if the operation is not done? If the operation is not done at this time, can it be done later? What are the advantages and disadvantages?
5. **What is the anticipated outcome of the procedure?**
What exactly are the expected or possible benefits of doing the procedure?
6. **What are the specific risks that this procedure involves?**
What are the problems, complications, or conditions that are the risks of the procedure? What are the risks of the type of anesthesia to be used? What are the possibilities for anesthesia methods (local, regional, general, etc.)?
7. **What about a second opinion?**
A second opinion is very reasonable for an elective procedure. This will not be a problem with the first surgeon who will recognize this as commonplace. Second opinions can reassure anxious patients (and family members) to make the whole process easier for all involved.
8. **What is the recovery process after this procedure?**
Procedures each vary in terms of wound recovery and rehabilitation programs. It is very important for patients to know the long-term program ahead of time for the best planning.

For additional surgery resources visit:

http://www.medicinenet.com/surgery_questions/index.htm

MedicineNet.com – Additional Resources

Below are links to additional information available on MedicineNet.com.

The doctor-produced articles on MedicineNet are:

- **Reliable and objective** -- each article is written, edited, and reviewed by more than one U.S. Board Certified doctor.
- **User-friendly** -- articles are written by doctors in easy-to-understand language.
- **Comprehensive** -- doctors not only present scientific knowledge, they also explain how they make treatment and diagnostic decisions.
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http://www.medicinenet.com/procedures_and_tests/article.htm

Medications (non-prescription and prescription drugs)

<http://www.medicinenet.com/medications/article.htm>

MedTerms Medical Dictionary

<http://www.medterms.com>

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