



Transforming
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS
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Effective Communication with Your Healthcare Provider

Health literacy is defined as the degree to which one has the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services to make appropriate health choices. Research shows that 40% of adults lack the level of health literacy necessary to manage their own healthcare (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services).

Effective communication with your healthcare provider is paramount to getting healthy and staying healthy. In addition to the positive benefits to overall health, finding a provider you can communicate with aids in improving the quality of your healthcare decisions by enabling you to make the most informed decisions necessary for proper treatment. Communication also promotes cost effectiveness and reduces healthcare spending by avoiding duplication of unnecessary tests and procedures. Open communication between patients and healthcare providers makes patient follow-through on treatments more likely and ensures a better overall understanding of their diagnosis and treatment options. Better understanding, in addition to leading to improved survival and overall health and wellness, provides more positive health outcomes, enables patient self management, and improved care coordination among the patient and other members of the healthcare team.

Tips for Communicating with your Healthcare Provider

- ❖ Write down questions and points you want to convey before the appointment
- ❖ Be clear and concise
- ❖ If you have lots of concerns to discuss, make this known at the time of scheduling so extra time can be scheduled
- ❖ Educate yourself about your condition by using reputable sources
- ❖ Learn the routine of your provider's office and use it to your advantage
- ❖ Recognize that not all questions have answers
- ❖ Use "I" statements
- ❖ Share facts; don't make assumptions
- ❖ Listen actively
- ❖ Ask for clarification when necessary

The importance of communicating effectively with your healthcare provider is vital when it comes to preserving, maintaining, or regaining optimal health.

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Getting the Most from Your Medical Appointment

The average length of an appointment with your healthcare provider is approximately 15 minutes. Given the short amount of time you have face-to-face with your provider, it is important to prepare for the appointment to efficiently use the time you will have to discuss your concerns and become informed about your plan of care. The tips outlined below are designed to provide you with detailed action steps you can take before, during, and after an appointment to ensure you are receiving the health care you deserve.

Before the Appointment

- Make a list of questions
- List your symptoms, including date of onset, duration, and severity
- Create a timeline of the problem. If you have consulted other physicians about this problem, keep track of previous test results, outcomes, and treatment recommendations
- Make a list of all current medications and supplements
- Bring all necessary records and insurance information
- Arrive early, if requested, to complete paperwork

During the Appointment

- Take notes or consider bringing someone along to take notes
- Ask questions from your prepared list of questions
- If you don't understand something, ask for clarification
- At the end of the appointment, summarize what the doctor has recommended
- Ask about next steps, follow-up appointments, referral to a specialist, treatment or testing recommendations, and the timeline for completing
- Find out who to contact if you have questions and the best way to contact them

After the Appointment

- Follow treatment recommendations or seek a second opinion
- Make any necessary follow-up appointments
- Don't hesitate to call with questions

The content of this presentation is provided for informational and educational purposes only in order to assist you in making your own informed decisions about your care and treatment options. The content of this presentation does not constitute medical advice or opinion in any manner whatsoever. The content of this presentation should never be substituted in place of medical advice/opinion from a licensed physician. All questions regarding your specific diagnosis and treatment should always be directed to a licensed physician.