

**We know that provider's appointments aren't always the highlight of your day, but they're a vital part of managing your health. With most visits being 20 minutes or less, being prepared and focused is more important than ever. By actively participating, you can use your time effectively and benefit more from your provider's expertise, all while building a strong relationship.**

Here are some strategies to help you and your provider work together effectively:

### **UNDERSTAND YOUR FAMILY HEALTH HISTORY**

Sometimes health issues run in families but don't show up in your parents or siblings; they might appear in other relatives instead. Your aunts, uncles, grandparents, and cousins share some of your genes. This means their health problems might give clues about your own health.

### **TRACK YOUR SYMPTOMS**

Keeping a symptom journal is a powerful tool, whether you're seeking a new diagnosis or managing an ongoing condition. This journal helps you identify triggers, warning signs, and assess the effectiveness of your treatments. Include details like when symptoms started, their nature and intensity, any accompanying signs, how long episodes last, and the impact of any treatments you've tried. Taking a few minutes before your appointment to review these trends can be incredibly helpful for both you and your provider.



### **USE THE PATIENT PORTAL TO YOUR ADVANTAGE**

Review your notes from your last appointment so you can remember what was discussed. Make notes of any new things that have happened (starting a new medication, any new symptoms you may be experiencing) since your last visit so that you can bring them up during your appointment.

### **KEEP A RUNNING LIST OF QUESTIONS**

Use your phone or a small notebook to jot down questions as they come to mind. This way, when you're with your provider, you'll have all your thoughts organized, allowing you to be fully present and engaged in the conversation instead of trying to recall what you wanted to discuss.

### **CHECK IN WITH YOUR PROVIDER BEFORE YOUR APPOINTMENT**

Send questions or topics you want to discuss in advance in your patient portal so your provider has a chance to review them before your visit. Send your message at least 24-48 hours before your appointment when possible. Be concise but thorough – bullet points work well for listing symptoms or questions. If you don't have portal access, you might be able to call the office and leave detailed information with the nursing staff.

## PRIORITIZE YOUR CONCERNS

Your appointment time is most likely limited, so it's best to focus on your top three most important issues. While it's tempting to list everything, your provider likely won't be able to address all of your concerns in depth. Remember, your provider may also have topics they want to discuss. If you have additional concerns, ask if you can schedule a follow-up, or inquire about sending questions through your patient portal so they aren't overlooked.

## REVIEW ALL YOUR MEDICATIONS

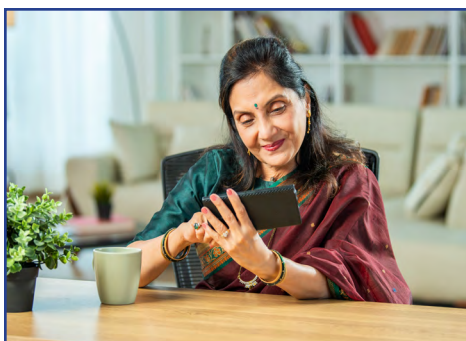
Your provider must have a complete and accurate list of all medications you're taking, including over-the-counter drugs, herbal remedies, and supplements. Some over-the-counter items can interact with prescribed medications or alter their effectiveness. Consider bringing the actual medication bottles with their original labels to your appointment. At the very least, bring a detailed list including the medication names, dosages, frequency, and purpose for each.

## CONSIDER BRINGING A TRUSTED COMPANION

Having a trusted friend or family member join you at your appointment can be incredibly beneficial. They can offer a "second set of eyes and ears," helping to absorb information you might miss or by taking notes while you focus on the discussion and examination.



**By taking these steps, you are not just a patient; you are an active participant and partner in your healthcare journey, leading to more personalized and effective care.**



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