



Make the Most of Your Doctor Visits

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Pre-reading

Questions: What does it mean to you to “make the most of your doctor visits”?

Definitions: Diagnosis – a finding based on the study or examination of a person

Side effect – a secondary effect of a drug or medicine besides the intended effect

Routine screening – a regular testing for disease in people who do not have symptoms

Reading

18 When you go to your doctor’s office, you may find yourself spending more time in the waiting room
than in the examining room. Patients today spend about 15 minutes actually seeing their doctor.

33 What’s more, doctor visits have become more complex. Doctors are making more diagnoses per visit
48 and managing multiple medications. Plus, patients are challenging the traditional model of “follow doctor’s
62 orders.” With Web and other drug advertising, people are likely to ask more questions or voice strong
79 opinions about their care.

83 Research shows that patients who are actively involved with their own health care decisions tend to get
100 better results. To get the most out of your visit, approach it as if you were planning for a business meeting.
121 Organize your thoughts, establish an agenda, and by all means, write things down.

134 Do you have symptoms? Write down notes about when they started, what happens when they occur
150 and what makes them better or worse. Are you on medication? Write down questions about how long you’re
168 supposed to take it, the likely side effects, the costs, and if there is any food, drink or activities you should
189 avoid while taking the medication.

194 Doctor’s offer these recommendations to make your visit to the doctor an effective, beneficial one:

- 209 • If you can, make an appointment early in the day. Throughout the day doctors may be
225 called away by emergencies, or they may just not be able to keep up with all the patients
243 they are scheduled to see in a day. The earlier your appointment, the less likely you’ll
259 be affected by schedule changes. If the doctor is running late, you should be given an
275 update or estimate of his or her arrival. If you’re not told, ask.
- 288 • Mention all medications you are taking. This includes all the medications prescribed by
301 other doctors, over-the-counter pills, and even those medications that you are supposed
313 to take, but don’t. Make a list, or better yet, bring all your pill bottles with you.
- 330 • Tell the doctor about your concerns, or fears. Make a list, in order of importance, of
346 medical concerns or worries that you have. If you smoke, or are depressed, or are under
362 stress, your doctor can help.
- 367 • Bring along a family member or friend. If you think you may have a hard time remembering
384 or understanding the doctor’s recommendations, it’s OK to have someone accompany you to
397 the office.
- 399 • Before you leave, make sure you know what you’re supposed to do next. When are you due
416 back? Are you supposed to call, or will someone from the office call with your lab results?
433 What routine screenings are coming up next? How should you prepare for them? Don’t leave
448 the doctor’s office until you understand what happens next.

457 Your relationship with your doctor is a **partnership**. Effective communication will help you and your
472 doctor make the best decisions for your health.

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Level 6.0

Understanding

1. In this reading, to what is the preparation for a doctor visit compared? _____

2. What should you do before you leave the doctor's office? _____

3. When is a good time to schedule a doctor's appointment? Why? _____

4. What does the word **partnership** mean? _____

5. Why should you consider bringing a friend with to a doctor visit? _____

6. What kinds of things would you want to have written down before seeing the doctor? (List at least three.) _____

7. In addition to specific symptoms you may have, what other kinds of things would be helpful for the doctor to know; what other issues could he/she help you with? _____

Writing

Choice A: Summarize the reading in your own words.

Choice B: Write about a typical or not so typical doctor's appointment you've had. What went well? What didn't go well? How could the visit have been a better one?

Choice C: How do you make the most of your doctor visits? What could you do to make your doctor visits better?
