

A Checklist for Making the Most of Your Doctor Visit

BEFORE THE VISIT

Prepare before the visit

- Prepare a list of any medications you are currently taking.
- Prepare a list of your symptoms and concerns. If you have seen a different doctor before for a similar problem, arrange for a copy of your medical records to be sent to your current physician.
- State your problem or concerns first.
- Describe your symptoms.
- Describe any past experience or treatment for the same problem.

DURING THE VISIT

If the doctor prescribes medication during the visit, ask the following:

- What is the name of the medication?
- Can a generic drug be substituted?
- What is the purpose of the drug?
- How should I take the drug?
- Are there any potential side effects?
- Are there any other medications (prescription or over-the-counter) that I should avoid while taking this medication?
- Should I avoid any specific food or beverage while I take this medication?
- How long should I take this medication?

For any prescribed drug, test, or treatment, ask the following questions:

- What is its name?
- Why is it needed?
- What are the risks involved?
- Are there alternatives?
- What if I do nothing?

At the end of your visit, ask the following:

- Should I return for a follow-up visit? When?
- How will I obtain my test results?
- Should I watch for any specific problems or side effects?
- Is there anything else I need to know?

AFTER THE VISIT

After you've left the doctor's office, keep a written record of the following:

- Your doctor's diagnosis
- Your next steps
- Prescribed treatments and home care techniques