



Health Awareness

How To Get The Most Out Of Your Next Doctor's Visit

(NAPSA)—Taking some time to think about your next doctor's visit can help you get the best possible care.

A successful relationship between doctor and patient requires open and honest communication from both sides, and an informed patient may find it easier to keep the lines of communication open.

Dr. Michael Lindberg, director of Medicine at Hartford Hospital, provides tips on how you can make the most out of every doctor's visit.

Pre-visit Preparation:

- An informed patient can contribute to the success of the doctor-patient relationship. While patients can benefit from having some background knowledge when they go to appointments, they should be wary of some medical information sources available online.

Web sites such as WebMD.com are reputable online references that are reviewed by people who work in the field. Be cautious about TV commercials—most likely, the content is provided by companies trying to sell you their product. Keep in mind that even if a friend or family member displayed similar symptoms, it does not mean that you have the exact same condition or require the same treatment.

- Prepare and bring a list of issues you want to discuss. Remember that some issues may



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require a more in-depth follow-up appointment.

- Review your medications or, even better, bring the bottles with you.

Making the Most of Your Doctor's Visit:

- Be on time—or even a little early—to fill out paperwork for your appointment. Despite common perceptions, most doctors' offices run on time.

- Go in wanting to be honest and up-front. No question is too embarrassing to ask.

- If you don't understand something, ask for clarification right away. Don't think it will come up later. If you leave confused, the visit has failed.

- Be clear and concise when explaining yourself, and very specific when describing your symptoms. Focus on the main reason for your appointment.

- Remember that it is your body and your life. Take charge of it. Look on your relationship with your doctor as a partnership. You have to work together, and that means open and honest communication from both sides.

What Not To Do During a Visit:

- Don't anticipate that doctors know more about you than they do; be ready to spell it out.

- Don't be afraid to ask what options there are for treatment. It's important for your doctor to understand your health goals and values.

- Don't stay with a doctor you have trouble communicating with. If the relationship is not working, tell the doctor why and move on.

- Don't drop an "oh, by the way" at the end of an appointment. Be up-front early about your concerns.

Taking Care Outside the Doctor's Office:

- Take preventive care by taking recommended vaccines and ensuring that you are up to date with all cancer and cholesterol screenings. Talk to your doctor about which age-appropriate steps should be taken to keep you healthy.

- Maintain proper diet and regular exercise.

- Don't smoke.

More health tips and other helpful information can be found at www.hartfordhospital.org.