



Making the most of your visit to the doctor

When you visit any doctor, be it your local GP, a specialist, or in hospital, remember that they are there to help, advise and inform you of your condition and the treatment options available to assist you. To make the visit more productive we offer you the following hints:

- Make a list of questions you need answered so that you don't forget anything
 - most people remember only about half of the information given to them. Add to the list any symptoms, concerns or changes in your life that may have occurred recently or since your last visit to the doctor.
- Know the name and dosage of any medications you are taking regularly or occasionally.
- If you need repeat prescriptions, make a note to ask for them.
- If you don't know much about your condition, it is helpful to read up or try to obtain more information to give you some background, and become familiar with the vocabulary or terms that will be used.
- If you feel anxious, it may be worth taking a family member or close friend with you.
- Be aware of your own and your family's medical history.
- If you have a chronic illness, consider keeping a record of your contacts with health professionals in an exercise book.

DURING THE VISIT

- Tell the doctor you have some questions.
- Write down the answers – don't trust your memory .
- Tell the doctor if you are currently in consultation with or receiving treatment from another doctor.

- Your doctor should provide a clear explanation of your condition, planned treatment, alternative procedures available and possible side effects.
- If you think you may not be able to follow any instructions tell the doctor immediately to avoid problems later.
- Before leaving, make sure you have a clear idea of your treatment plan and also any recommended reading materials that may assist you in understanding or coping with your condition.
- If there are several drugs you must take or other complicated treatments to follow, ask the doctor to write them down for you.

AFTER THE VISIT

- Don't be afraid to call the doctor between visits with any concerns.
- Make a list of recommendations by the doctor and keep this visible (eg. on fridge).
- Trust and respect is important in a doctor–patient relationship. If you don't feel comfortable with your doctor it may be worth seeking a second opinion or finding another doctor.
- Different people are suited to different doctors – find someone who you can relate to.
- Follow the doctors' suggestions to the best of your ability.
- You are ultimately responsible for your well–being.
- Remember, doctors are human beings too!