

Getting the Most Out of Your Doctor's Visit

Your visit with an orthopaedic surgeon is an important meeting that can be most effective if you plan ahead. Research shows that patients who are more involved with their care get better results.

The following checklist will help you become more active in your healthcare and get the most out of each office visit.

Before You Go

- **Find out the basics about the office.**
 - Where is it? What time should you arrive? If you're going to drive, where can you park? Do you need to bring your insurance card or a medical referral?
- **Assemble your records.**
 - Compile medical documents and records to take to the doctor's office. These may include:
 - Relevant medical records from other doctors
 - Results and copies of x-rays and other imaging studies
 - Results from any lab tests
- **Make written lists.**
 - All the medications you take regularly, including any herbs, vitamin supplements and over-the-counter medications you may be taking
 - Your medical history, such as prior treatments for heart or thyroid problems
 - Past surgeries, even those not related to your current problem
 - All allergies (rash, hives, swelling) or unexpected reactions (nausea, drowsiness) to medications
 - Any medical problems that run in your family
 - Your concerns about your condition (pain, loss of mobility or function)
- **Bring a friend.**
 - Consider asking a friend or family member to accompany you to help ask questions and remember all of the information your doctor provides. If you need a translator, ask another adult to come

with you; do not rely on a child to translate.

- **Dress appropriately.**
 - For spine and many problems involving the arms and legs, you may be asked to undress. Wear loose clothing that is easy to take off and put on.

At Your Doctor's Office

- **Arrive early.**

You will need time to complete any required forms or tests before meeting with your doctor.
- **Be honest and complete in talking with your doctor.**

Share your point of view and do not hold back information that you think may be unimportant or embarrassing, such as incontinence or memory loss.
- **Stick to the point.**

It might be fun to share news about the children, but keep it short to get the most out of your time with the doctor.
- **Take notes and ask questions.**

Take notes on what the doctor tells you and ask questions if you do not understand a medical term, the reason for the doctor's recommendations, or the instructions for taking medication.
- **Ask what to expect from your treatment.**

Find out what effect it will have on your daily activities, and what you can do to prevent further disability.
- **Ask for more information to take with you.**

Ask your doctor for handouts or brochures that you and your family members can review at home. Your doctor may refer you to a website for more information.
- **Talk to the other members of the healthcare team.**

Physician assistants, nurses, and therapists (speech, physical or occupational) can also address any questions or concerns.

When You Get Home

- **Review the materials your doctor gave you.**

If you cannot remember something, or if you do not understand your notes, call the office and speak to a member of your healthcare team.
- **Follow your doctor's instructions.**

Take the full course of medication and make sure you follow the prescribed diet or exercise routine. Remember, you are a part of your healthcare team, too.

- **Keep your doctor informed.**

Follow up with your doctor on test results, adverse reactions to medication, or any complications or worsening of your condition.

Last Reviewed

March 2019

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