

## **Be Prepared**

Starting with a new physician can be both worthwhile and a pleasant experience. Most people have at least some apprehension when going to a physician for the first time. It can be a difficult and embarrassing task speaking to someone new about something as personal as your health matters. To make your visit to the doctor more pleasant, there are several things that you can do to get off in the right direction.

Your first contact with the medical office might be scheduling your appointment. When calling be prepared to ask and answer plenty of questions. You might want to verify that the physician is the right kind of doctor to handle your problem or has the ability to get you to someone that does. Make sure they participate in your insurance program if you intend to use your insurance. If your appointment is a non-urgent matter, you might ask if there are times that the doctor is less busy. Often early in the morning and later in the afternoon after school and work are over can be busy times leading to longer waits. Despite popular belief, it is not the physician's goal to make any patient wait. It is practically impossible to determine how long it will take with each patient or how often someone with an urgent condition calls and is told to come right in. Schedule an appointment when you have extra time in case there is a wait before being seen. This can lead to much less frustration.

Try to arrive about 15 minutes early on your first visit as there are always numerous forms that will need to be filled out. Make sure you have a current photo identification, any insurance cards, and a way to pay any balance you may have. It is sometimes difficult to remember all the information you want to tell the doctor, so it might be better for you to write down everything you want to tell the doctor. If you have many medical records that need to be reviewed, it might be a good idea to bring them by ahead of time, so they can be looked at before being seen. Bring in a list of your current medications with the correct dosages. Remembering this information accurately is always confusing.

Please make sure at the end of your visit that you understand everything that was planned and what you need to do. It is a good idea to repeat back what your problem is and the plan that your doctor proposes to ensure there is no misunderstandings or confusion. If necessary, write down your instructions.

I hope that you will have the feeling of satisfaction upon leaving the doctors office. Understanding and agreeing with your treatment plan that was developed during the doctor visit should make you feel this. Here is to your good health.