

Communicating With Your Doctor

Communication is the key to establishing a good doctor-patient relationship

For some people, a visit to their doctor is an intimidating experience. One way to make a visit to your doctor's office more rewarding is to know ahead of time how to make the most of the doctor-patient relationship.

The doctor-patient relationship is really a partnership. The doctor provides medical assistance and guidance, and the patient provides information, asks questions and follows the treatment plan. The following suggestions can help you more effectively communicate with your doctor during your visit:

- Prepare for your appointment beforehand. Write down information to share with your doctor such as:

- the problem or concern
- the symptoms, when they started
- how often the symptoms occur
- the part of the body involved
- if you have had the symptoms before
- any family members with the same symptoms or illness
- home remedies or over-the-counter medications you have tried

- Bring any related health records with you to your appointment. These records should include information about allergies and other health problems. Also, tell your doctor about any medications prescribed by another doctor and nonprescription medications you use.

- Be specific when describing your symptoms to your doctor. Avoid vague statements such as "I feel sick." Instead say "For the past five days I have had headaches and nausea." The more details you provide, the easier it will be to make a diagnosis.

- When your doctor offers information, make sure that everything is completely clear. If your doctor prescribes medication, ask what the medication is, how to take it, and what side effects might be involved. Take notes during your visit. You won't benefit from your doctor's advice if you don't remember it.

- Keep the lines of communication open so that your doctor knows how you are progressing.

Remember, by becoming more actively involved in the doctor-patient relationship, you can actually improve the quality of the health care you receive.

