



## How to make the most of your doctor's visit

- Make a list of the issues you would like to discuss during your office visit. Include in the list, any details that might be relevant.
- When scheduling your appointment, ask the receptionist how much time is being schedule for your visit. This helps you understand how much time is allocated to your visit.
- Begin your appointment by summarizing the issues you would like to address during the visit. This give the provider an opportunity to listen to all of your concern at the beginning of the appointment, and avoid the “oh, by the way” items as the doctor is wrapping up the visit.
- Bring your medications to every office visit. Include all supplements, OTC medications, and medications prescribed by other physicians.
- Do not be bashful about presenting information or research to your physician. Often the Internet, or other resources are helpful. Provide copies, and keep the originals. If your physician does not feel the information is relevant, they will explain.
- If the physician uses terms you do not understand, simply ask “What does that mean in layman’s terms?” Often, physicians forget that medical terminology is not a common part of the average vocabulary. The explanation should make sense to you!
- When given a diagnosis, ask about other possible diagnosis. Many times there are other illnesses with similar presentations as yours. You have a right to understand the diagnosis, prognosis, treatment plan as well as the risks and benefits of the treatment.
- If special tests are ordered, ask the doctor, “How long after the test is done should I wait for the results.” Then hold that doctor to that time frame. You should be notified by the ordering doctor (or staff) of the results of all tests that are ordered. Some tests results take longer than others to return. Never assume that if you were not notified of the results, that the test was normal.
- If a diagnosis is uncertain, or you are uncomfortable with a diagnosis, do not feel that you are insulting the doctor by asking for a second opinion. Most doctors are more than happy to find a second opinion, or explain why it would not be helpful. Second opinions may have to be approved by your insurance.
- When you are given a prescription, remind the physician of your allergies, current medication, and any over the counter medications you are taking. Drug interactions and side effects can be often be avoided by asking simple questions.

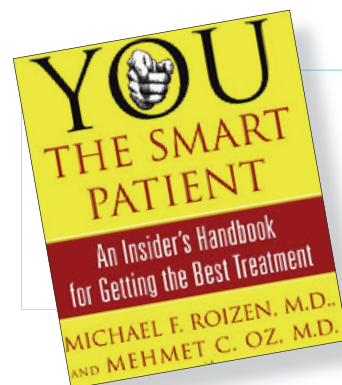
- If you have a disability, or are concerned you may not understand an explanation, take a friend or advocate with you to help. Take notes or record the conversation.
- You may ask about your provider’s title (doctor, physician assistant, nurse practitioner, medical student) and if they are board certified.

### Children

- Bring immunization records for the first visit.

## How to make the most of your hospital stay

- The best care is provided when a family member/friend is present. Ask if a family member can stay in the room. Have that member keep a log (notebook) of questions and concerns.
- Bring your medications to the emergency room or to the hospital when you are admitted.
- Ask about the medications you are to receive. Ask about each pill, and what it is for. Don’t forget about IV medications as well. If you are uncertain about a medication, wait until you can talk to your physician.
- Ask the doctor, “What is the plan for today?” You have the right to know what procedures/therapies/tests will be done that day.
- If you are having a test performed, confirm with transporter and the technician that the test is ordered for you.
- Plan your hospital discharge early. It is perfectly appropriate to begin thinking about the things you will need to assist you when you are discharged. Ask questions as soon as you are admitted. Every hospital has “case managers” that arrange for home health care, medical equipment or other items that may help your recovery.
- If you have a living will, make sure a copy is provided to the hospital staff.
- When large families wish to keep informed, designate one person to communicate with the doctor and allow them to communicate a “daily report”. Schedule family meetings with the doctor at a time that they routinely round on patients.



You: The Smart Patient.  
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