

## When It Comes to Your Health, Speak Up!



### The importance of communicating with your healthcare team

Living with a chronic condition means that you may see your doctor a lot. You likely have regular checkups to keep track of your health. There also may be times when you have concerns or questions about the way you are feeling.

Whatever the reason for seeing your doctor, it is important that you feel comfortable talking freely with him or her about your condition. In today's busy healthcare environment, the time you have with your doctor may be brief. But it can—and should—still be meaningful. You may have questions. You deserve answers. You also need to be able to express what you're feeling or thinking about your condition. It is something you are living with every day.

This handout is meant to give you helpful tips for getting the most out of your doctor visits. Being prepared before you go in to see your doctor can help ensure that you address everything you want to. And the more information you have about your condition, the better prepared you will be to manage it properly.

## PLANNING AHEAD

Before you visit your doctor...

- Think about whether you should bring a family member or caregiver with you. This person can
  - Help remind you of what you planned to talk about with your doctor
  - Take notes for you
  - Help you remember what the doctor said
- Write down the answers to these key questions and share them with your doctor:
  - What is the reason for this visit?
  - When did my symptoms start?
  - Have I seen a doctor about this before?

## Understanding Your Condition

Your doctor will diagnose your health condition only once. But getting a diagnosis is just the beginning. Knowing about your condition opens the door to a host of questions about how best to manage it and what to expect. If you have a condition that does not show any symptoms, you may even need to be reminded about what you are living with. The answers to these questions can help you remember to follow your treatment plan, even when you don't feel sick.





When speaking with your doctor, no questions or comments about your healthcare are off limits. Talk to your doctor about your daily life. There is nothing to be shy about when it comes to your health. Express any fears or concerns you may have about your condition. Your doctor is there to help.

## Understanding Your Prescription

When your doctor writes a prescription for you, there are key questions you should always ask:

1. Why am I taking this medicine?
2. How will it make me feel?
3. How will I know if it is working?
  - a. How many pills do I take?
  - b. When do I take them?
  - c. How long do I keep taking my medicine (refills)?

Also tell your doctor if anyone in your home or family helps you with your medicine.

## At the pharmacy

When you go to fill your prescription at the pharmacy, be sure the medicine that your doctor prescribed is the one that you get. Each time you pick up a new medicine, stop and ask questions:

1. How will this medicine make me feel?
2. How do I take it?
3. Will it interact with my other medications (including vitamins and supplements)?

If your pharmacist offers you a different medicine—a generic version of the medicine your doctor prescribed—ask if it is the best option for you in the long run, compared with the brand-name drug your doctor prescribed. If you have any questions about the suggestion to switch your medicine, call your doctor right away.

One of the most important things you can do to manage your condition is to communicate with your healthcare team. Keep your doctor and pharmacist informed about



### Changes to your condition

Are you feeling better? Worse? Different?

### Side effects of your medication

Were these expected? Unexpected?

**Any new or additional medications or supplements you start to take**