

Your Health: How to Partner With Your Doctor



Many people are happier with their health care if they share responsibility with their doctors. Your doctor is an expert on medical care, but you are the expert on yourself.

Often there is more than one choice for diagnosing or treating a condition. When you are a partner with your doctor, you can help decide what is best for your values, beliefs, and lifestyle. You will also feel more confident about carrying out the chosen treatment.

Your responsibilities

Build a relationship

- Find a doctor with whom you think you can build a long-term, comfortable relationship. It is important to find a doctor who will support this partnership.
- Tell your doctor that you want to be a partner in your health care. Tell him or her what your expectations are.

- Establish a long-term and comfortable relationship with your doctor. The relationship you have will greatly influence your ability to make wise health decisions. It can also affect the results you get from your care.

Be an active participant

- Listen carefully to what your doctor says. Make sure you understand what you are told about any diagnosis or treatment.
- Ask questions. If you do not understand something, ask the doctor or nurse to repeat it in a different way.
- Ask for instructions. Before you leave the doctor's office, make sure you know what you are supposed to do to care for yourself. Ask for written information or instructions.

Be honest

- Be honest. If your values, beliefs, fears, or concerns might interfere with a treatment that your doctor suggests, talk to him or her about it. There may be other choices available.
- If you do not intend to take a prescribed medicine or follow a recommended treatment plan, say so. Your doctor expects a certain response from the medicine or treatment being prescribed. If you do not stick to the plan, he or she will not know why you are not getting better or how to help you. Also tell your doctor your reasons. There may be other options for treating you.
- If you are using complementary treatment, such as acupuncture, or you are taking herbal supplements, let your doctor know. To be a good partner, your doctor has to know what is going on.

If you are telling your doctor about a health problem, get answers to the following questions by the end of your appointment:

What is my diagnosis and what might happen next?

Do I need medicine? No ___ Yes ___ If yes, fill in the information below.

Name of medicine	How much and how often	What to watch for

How should I care for myself at home? (eating, sleeping, exercise, other)

Do I have any concerns about being able to carry out my part of the treatment?

Where can I get more information about this problem or the treatment?

What symptoms should I watch for?

When should I call to report symptoms?

What is the best way to contact my doctor?

When is the next time I should contact my doctor?

Call for test results.
Date and time: _____

Return for an appointment.
Date and time: _____

Call to report how I am doing.
Date and time: _____

No follow-up contact needed.

