

Take charge of your health

Having control over your medical care can prevent stress, as well as mistakes that could affect your health. This doesn't mean you should diagnose yourself or change your medication dosage without consulting your doctor. It means it's a good idea to take an active role in managing your care.

Though you might have a doctor or pharmacist you trust, mistakes in health care delivery can happen. Here are some ways you can build more valuable, effective partnerships with your medical professionals:

Pay close attention to all medications you're taking. Make sure you know the reason why you're taking certain medications. It's very important that you carefully listen to and follow your doctor's instructions. Also, be sure to check with your pharmacist about interactions. Make sure to go over all the prescription drugs, over-the-counter medicines, herbal drugs and vitamins you are taking. Remind your doctor about other drugs or supplements you're taking any time you get a new prescription.

Prepare for appointments with your doctor. Going to the doctor can be nerve-racking. You may be worried about taking time away from work. Or, you may be anxious about the exam. Make a list of questions before you get to the office. This can help you feel less stressed out about the visit. It also can help your doctor address your concerns. During the appointment, write down instructions and information to refer to at home.

Stay organized. Remembering when your last vaccinations were or what month you had your last flu shot can be tricky. This can be even more difficult if you're keeping track for other family members, too. It helps to create an immunization chart and note the dates on which they were given.

Ask questions. Never be afraid to ask more questions if you're not sure about recommended care. You even may wish to seek a second opinion. Make sure you understand the training and qualifications of your doctors, and the ratings and experience of the hospitals you use.

Need help taking charge of your health? Call any time, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to get answers to your health questions.

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