

## Before you visit the doctor: a Checklist

1. Have you made notes on why you are seeing the doctor?
2. Do the notes tell how long it has been going on and how often it happens?
3. Do the notes tell what makes it better or worse?
4. Have you listed any other things to mention to the doctor?
5. Is your insurance card ready to take with you?
6. Is your personal medical history up to date and ready to take with you?
7. If your doctor has asked you to make an appointment to see another doctor, do you have a letter of referral from your doctor?
8. Do you have a list of all medications and vitamins you are taking?
9. When is your appointment?
10. What time will you have to leave to get to your appointment at least 15 minutes early?

This is an abridged version of a booklet available from Continuum of Care at the University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center. For more information or to obtain a copy of the booklet on “Making the Most of Your Visit with the Doctor,” please contact:

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Continuum  
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# MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR VISIT WITH THE DOCTOR



Continuum *of* Care

The University of New Mexico

Health Sciences Center



THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO • HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER  
**SCHOOL OF MEDICINE**

# Making the Most of Your Doctor Visit

**When do you need to see the doctor?** You may need to see the doctor that day or the next if you have

- A fever over 101 degrees for more than three days
- A stomachache or other pain that keeps you from doing the things you usually do for more than two days
- A very bad stomachache with vomiting
- A change in your bathroom habits (not having a bowel movement, or having a lot of loose bowel movements)
- A bad cut that is very deep
- A cut or sore that looks red and puffy and that feels hot and painful when you touch it
- Noticed that you feel very dizzy or sleepy all the time
- More seizures than usual or seizures that are different from usual
- A rash so bad that it causes a sore
- A very bad headache
- Problems catching your breath that is new or suddenly worse

**Calling the doctor's office** Some things to say when you call for a doctor appointment are:

- Why you need to see the doctor or what your question is
- When you need to see the doctor (if you are not sure, tell the nurse what made you decide you needed to see the doctor. The nurse can tell you if you need to see the doctor right away.)
- That you need a longer appointment (for example, 30 minutes) if you need extra time to communicate.
- Can you do anything until your appointment that will help you feel better?
- Should you bring anything with you?



## Getting Ready for the Appointment

It is a good idea to list important things to tell the doctor. It is a good idea to mention everything you can think of, even if it does not seem important. Sometimes

little details can give the doctor clues to what is making you feel bad. Here are a few things that can help the doctor:

- Have your bathroom habits changed lately?
- Have your moods or energy levels changed lately?
- Have you been sleeping more or less than usual lately?
- Do you have a medical condition that has changed lately?
- Have you been eating more or less than usual lately?
- Have you had other changes in your life or your daily activities?
- Have you changed the medicine you take lately?

## At the Doctor's Appointment

- During your visit, ask the doctor to explain anything you do not understand.



## Here are some questions to ask if the doctor wants you to take a new medicine:

- What does this medicine treat?
- How will I know it is working?
- What should I do if it is not working by the time that you said it would?
- How long do I take the medicine?
- How much do I take each day, and when?
- What should I do if I start to feel worse?
- What should I do if I forget to take my medicine?
- Will this medicine affect other medicines I take?
- Do I need to be careful about what I eat and drink while taking this medicine?
- Can we try another medicine if I don't like the way this one makes me feel?
- Is this medicine a pill or a liquid?
- Is there something I can do to feel better besides taking medicine?

**After the Doctor's Appointment** After you get home from the appointment, read through what the doctor wrote down or listen to someone you trust as they read it to you. It is a good idea to talk to someone about what happened at your appointment. If the doctor asked you to take a new medicine, pay attention over the next few days to how you are feeling. If you are not feeling better by the time the doctor said you would or if you start to feel worse, call the doctor's office to see what you should do. If you had tests run or you had to see another doctor, write the date you are supposed to hear from your doctor on your calendar. If you have not heard from your doctor within a few days of that date, call the doctor's office to follow up.