

Finding a doctor is serious business. This is the person you are entrusting with your health and perhaps the health of your family.

## Develop a Relationship with Your Doctor

TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN YOUR CARE

### So, how do you find the right doctor for you?

#### KEEP THESE THINGS IN MIND WHEN SELECTING A DOCTOR:

- Do you want one doctor to take care of your entire family? Then you may want a family practice doctor.
- Your medical history and conditions. Do you have an underlying health condition such as diabetes? Then you may want to go to an internal medicine doctor.
- Is it important for your physician to be close to where you work or to your home?
- Do you want a clinic that is open in the evenings?
- What about gender? Do you have a preference?
- Do you prefer a small private practice, or a large multi-specialty clinic?
- Does the doctor have admitting privileges at the hospital you prefer to use?
- Is the doctor in your health plan's provider network?

Once you have the name of a potential personal doctor, you can find out more about him or her when you make an appointment for a routine visit. As a new patient, more time will be scheduled for you. This gives you the opportunity to determine if you are comfortable with this particular doctor. Evaluate the doctor's responses with your expectations. If they don't match, continue your search.



## Help your doctor help you

Developing a relationship with your doctor is a two-way street. There are things you need to do to ensure you're receiving the best care, and there also are expectations the doctor has of you.

### HERE'S WHAT YOUR DOCTOR EXPECTS FROM YOU:

- An honest and complete medical history.
- A list of all the symptoms you are experiencing.
- A description of why your medications aren't working for you.
- Questions if you don't understand something the doctor has told you.
- Following his or her instructions.
- Following up with a phone call if you don't understand something once you leave the office, or if you are not getting better in the time frame your doctor gave you.

### IN RETURN, HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM YOUR DOCTOR:

- He or she takes an interest in your whole being:
  - Physically
  - Mentally
  - Emotionally
- A mutual feeling of trust.
- Patient in hearing all your symptoms and questions.
- Explains all diagnoses in a way you understand.
- Gives you treatment options when available.
- Explains outcomes in a way you understand.
- Asks your opinion about treatment options.

## The office visit

### WHEN YOU ARE AT THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE, DON'T FORGET TO BRING:

- Your list of questions — prioritize your concerns.
- A notebook and pencil — write down the answers.
- A family member or friend if you wish. When you're not feeling well, or are stressed or anxious, sometimes having somebody with you at your visit can help you better understand the doctor's diagnosis and treatment plan.
- A list of medications you are taking, including:
  - Prescriptions
  - Medicines that don't require a prescription, called over-the-counter medications
  - Vitamins, herbal and dietary supplements



## Get Referrals

One of the best ways to find a doctor who is right for you is to ask for referrals.

- Ask your friends and family who they go to and why they like that particular physician. You may find that what's important to them is not as important to you as your own criteria.
- Do you know anybody who works in health care? Ask them for their opinions on specific physicians. A good doctor's reputation follows him or her. So does the reputation of a not-so-good doctor.

You're probably used to answering your doctor's questions — not asking your own. But you have the right to ask questions, too. In fact, you should be able to ask questions about anything you'd like: It's your body.

These questions can help you start conversations about common health problems and concerns. You may want to print the list out and bring it to your doctor's appointment. You don't have to ask all of the questions — or even any of them — but you can use them as a guide.

### Questions for an illness or symptom:

- What's exactly is wrong with me?
- Can you draw me a picture or illustrate to me what's wrong?
- What causes this type of problem?
- Is this serious?
- Can I give this illness to someone else, and if so, how and for how long?
- Are there any activities or foods I should avoid until I'm better?
- How can I prevent this from happening again?

### Questions for medications:

- What does this medicine do?
- What will happen if I don't take it?
- What are the side effects?
- How long should I take it?
- What if I accidentally miss a dose?
- If I don't notice any improvement, how long should I wait before calling you?
- What is the cost? Does my insurance cover this medication? Is there a generic available?
- Is there anything I can do (lifestyle related) that would allow me to not have to take medication?

### Questions for tests and treatments:

- Why is this test needed?
- What will happen if I don't get the test?
- Are there any risks involved?
- Will it hurt? If so, is there anything we can do to lessen the pain?
- Can you perform the test or treatment in your office, or will I need to go to a lab or other facility?
- What are the side effects?
- How should I prepare for the test or treatment?
- What side effects or changes should I report to you?
- What are the costs of the tests/treatment? Does my insurance cover it?
- Are there any less invasive treatments available for my condition?

The more questions you ask, the more you discover about your body.

And when you know what's going on with your body, you can take better control of your own health — today and in the future.