



BCMS REPORT

BALTIMORE CITY MEDICAL SOCIETY FOUNDATION

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“How to be a good patient” ~ Tyler Cymet, D.O.

Having a good doctor doesn't mean that a person gets good medical care. It increases the chances, but is only half of the relationship. Doctors can advocate best for people they know well and understand. The long-term satisfaction of being a doctor comes from the relationships developed with the people for whom we care. Everyone needs to learn to be “good patients”. What you need to do may vary from doctor to doctor, but there are some general rules that you can follow to be the best patient possible:



1. ***Know why you are going to see a doctor.*** Sounds silly, but every day people come into doctors' offices saying that they are there because they feel that they are supposed to be there. Good start, but how would you know if your doctor did a good job or not? If you know the purpose of the visit and what you want to get from the visit before going in, you can better judge whether the visit was successful or not.
2. ***Be ready to listen.*** Often the doctor's main role is to be a teacher. Education may be the best thing the medical profession has to offer. Much of what docs want to do is change lifestyle, or look at diet, weight and even sexual habits. Doctors are your consultants, sharing with you what they have seen happen to other people who have the same problems you have.
3. ***Be prepared.*** You are going to be asked if you take any medicines, vitamins, herbs, oils or teas. If you write them down and have a copy that the doctor can keep, the doctor will have more time to spend with you. Most doctors will appreciate the effort and thoughtfulness and it also creates a more accurate chart than if the doctor listened and wrote them down.
4. ***Know your family history.*** Genes give the doctor a good idea of your body's weaknesses. If you know what problems your blood relatives have, the doctor will check you for the same problems.
5. ***Don't expect a drug.*** A pill doesn't exist for every problem. You shouldn't feel cheated if you came to the doctor and learned something but didn't get a pill.
6. ***Be prepared to return.*** Relationships are hard to develop in a once-a-year visit. If there are problems that need to be watched, it may mean more visits.
7. ***Share information.*** Information that is available to everyone may not be seen by everyone. When you find new treatments or ideas about your health on the Internet, in books or on television, feel free to share it with your doctor, but don't expect that the doctor knows everything about everything. Give your doctor time to research the topic.
8. ***Be prepared to advocate with your insurance company.*** If someone else is paying for all or part of your visit, then they have the ability to determine where and how you may get medical care. A doctor cannot guarantee that he or she will change the entire insurance system, but they can provide you with the support to get what you need.
9. ***Be honest.*** The doctor's office is where you should feel comfortable to voice your fears.
10. ***Be timely and expect timeliness.*** Patients should arrive and be seen in a timely manner. If you have waited more than thirty minutes, speak up.

A “good doctor” and a “good patient” don't always equal “good medical care”. Doctors and patients should strive for trust, comfort and a healthy relationship. Being a good patient is much more than showing up to an appointment on time. It takes much more work and thought, but can be extremely rewarding for all those involved.



ABCs FOR VISITING YOUR DOC!

Before the appointment:

- A. Write down all medicines you currently use, whether prescription, over-the counter, vitamins or other supplements and show the list to your doctor.
- B. Write down all questions that you would like to ask your doctor, as well as any lifestyle changes such as diet/appetite, stress level, mood, sleep patterns, alcohol consumption, smoking and sex drive.

During the appointment:

- C. Be sure to ask all the questions on your list.
- D. Take notes, especially possible side effects of medications. Be sure to write down the date of your next appointment.
- E. Make sure you understand everything the doctor told you. Ask he/she to repeat or use simpler terms if what they said is unclear.

After the appointment:

- F. Refer to your notes from the appointment. Write down any changes that you notice and be sure to let your doctor know at the next appointment.
- G. If anything seems out of the ordinary, or if you have problems with any medicines, call your doctor.

SYMPTOMS YOU SHOULD NEVER IGNORE:

- Severe headaches
- Unexplained weight loss
- Difficulty or problems with swallowing
- Fullness after small meals
- Stomach pain
- Change in bowel movements
- Slurred speech
- Weakening of arms, hands, legs or feet
- Loss of coordination
- Forgetting things

**3 Qs
4 U**

Good Questions for your Good Health!

Every time you talk with a doctor, nurse or pharmacist, use these "Ask Me 3" questions to better understand your health:

- 1** What is my main problem?
- 2** What do I need to do?
- 3** Why is it important for me to do this?

Asking these questions can help me:

- ✧ Take care of my health
- ✧ Prepare for medical tests
- ✧ Take my medicines the right way