

How to be an effective partner in your healthcare: Increasing the quality of time spent with your doctor

1. Be Prepared

- a. Bring a list or have all of your medications out and ready especially if needing refills. Make sure to include vitamins and supplements. Have the correct spelling, dose and frequency of medications. Initiate refills requests with the nurse when being taken back for your appointment and know if you need a 1 month or 3 month supply. If requesting a change of medications due to insurance coverage, please try and obtain the list of covered medications for your plan.
 - b. If you have multiple medical problems or questions please write them all down. Start with your most important concerns first.
 - c. If possible bring your previous doctors' information, including fax and telephone number and address. Bring pertinent records i.e. image reports, last labs, actual EKGs or stress test, colonoscopy report, and last progress notes, including last physical or well woman exam. This will make your visit more effective and efficient.
 - d. If you are here for a hospital follow-up try to obtain the discharge summary. The diagnoses and treatment plan including any tests or labs that need to be followed up are also needed. This is not required for any services performed at St. Josephs Hospital as we have immediate online access.
 - e. If you are here for lab or test results performed somewhere else, try to get a hard copy of the report and bring them with you to review. If unable to obtain the report or the tests were done in this clinic make sure to tell the nurse what tests or labs were performed and the date they were done, to make sure the results are in the chart. If they are not in the chart, she can look for the results while you wait for the doctor to arrive.
 - f. Tell the nurse why you are here, even if you are unsure of the reason. If you are here for a female exam or genital or breast problem etc, make sure to tell the nurse so she can have you undress appropriately and set up the room. If you are more comfortable, you may bring a robe from home for your exam versus a paper gown.
 - g. If you have a foot, leg or back problem etc make sure the affected area is exposed, so the doctor can examine it. Ask for a gown from the nurse if necessary.
 - h. If you are getting labs drawn make sure to notify the nurse of any specific testing you expect or wish to have performed. For routine labs, you need to be fasting (nothing to eat or drink ten hours prior except plain water and your medications) and this is usually done in the morning.
 - i. When requesting referrals make sure you know whom you need to see and why. If possible have a list of who is covered on your insurance plan.
2. Please try to arrive five minutes prior to your appointment time. Arrive earlier for any insurance or address changes.
 3. For any urinary problems please be prepared to leave a specimen and advise your nurse when being taken back for your appointment.
 4. For women, if there is any chance you may be pregnant (even women having normal menses can be pregnant) and here for abnormal bleeding, nausea/vomiting, abdominal pain, breast tenderness etc. or birth control, please advise your nurse when being taken back for your appointment. The nurse will have you leave a specimen prior to being seen.

We strive to give you the attention and care you deserve. With your help we will make it the best experience possible. Thank you for all your assistance in making your visit a pleasant and efficient one!