

Before the appointment

Be ready to discuss your child's condition with facts in writing and, if possible, documentation. Your time and the doctor's time are valuable. If you go to the medical visit prepared, it will be more satisfying for both of you.

Keep a journal:

Write down your observations of behavior, illness, temperatures, eating habits or anything else that your physician may need to

know regarding your child's diagnosis or health.

Keep medical records: You have the right to copies of your child's medical records.

Keep your own records of tests, procedures, and their results.

Write out questions:

Do not hesitate to ask questions and do not be embarrassed to ask for clarification when you don't understand something the doctor says.

Prepare your child:

Tell your child what to expect, who you will be seeing and why, and what tests may be done. Take comfort items along on the appointment.



During the appointment

Do your part:

Work at understanding—listen and take notes. You cannot control how well another person will listen, but you can make sure you are doing your part.

Gain an understanding: Ask the doctor to explain the care or treatment plan and put it in writing. Repeat the care plan back to the doctor as you understand it.

Set time limits:

In your written plans, state when you understand something is to be done and follow up on it. Set up a specific time to meet with the doctor to receive test results or discuss what a specialist has suggested.

Ask questions:

If you are uncertain or uncomfortable about a diagnosis or treatment, follow your instincts about your child.

Be organized:

“Do not hesitate to ask questions and do not be embarrassed ... when you don't understand something the doctor says.”

“If you are uncertain or uncomfortable... follow your instincts about your child.”

If the doctor does not have time to answer all of your questions or needs time to look into the matter, give the doctor a written list of questions and ask that he or she call you back at home to continue the discussion. Ask him to set up a time frame.

Think team effort:

If you anticipate major discussion, diagnosis, or treatment plans at the appointment, consider taking a trusted friend or family member along so you can debrief and confer afterwards.

After the appointment

Have confidence:

Ask for a second opinion if you feel it is needed.

Follow your instincts:

If you are uncertain or uncomfortable about a diagnosis or treatment, follow your instincts about your child and talk more with the physician about your concern.

Change doctors, if necessary:

Some reasons to change doctors:

- The doctor is not responsive to your concerns
- The doctor is not listening to you and your child
- The doctor is not communicating with specialists or not helping you coordinate your child's care.