



Preventive Health - Talking with your doctor

How well you and your doctor talk to each other is an important part of your health care. In the past, the doctor typically took the lead and the patient followed. Today, a good doctor-patient relationship is more of a partnership.

Getting started: The importance of your preventive health visit.

Making an appointment for a preventive health visit may help you establish the baseline for your current health, and identify any health issues before they become more serious. Preventive checkups and screenings can help you and your doctor discuss care options that may help maintain or improve your health. During a preventive visit your doctor will usually determine what tests or screenings you need based on many factors such as your age, overall health status and any chronic conditions you might have.

Getting ready: Preparing for your appointment

Having a basic plan can help you make the most of your appointment. Part of your plan should include talking with your doctor about your health history and any concerns you have about a particular health problem or changes in your life.

- ▶ Make a list of your concerns, put them in order and ask the most important ones first.
- ▶ Take information with you – any medications you take (prescription drugs, over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal remedies or supplements); names of other health care providers you see; and your medical records from your previous doctor, if your current doctor does not have them.

- ▶ Inform your doctor about any recent events or changes in your health, including emergency room visits or changes in your appetite, weight, sleep, energy level, or any other symptoms.

Getting involved: It's a give and take

Giving and taking information are two important steps in talking with your doctor. This may help you and your doctor develop a health treatment plan that's right for you, and help you make informed health care decisions. Ask about prevention, including lifestyle changes and preventive screening exams or tests to help prevent or manage a condition.

Give. Let your doctor know how you feel physically, emotionally and mentally. Tell your doctor about your habits. Describe any symptoms, including how these symptoms affect your daily activities.

Take. Ask questions, then take the answers to help you make informed decisions and manage your health. Asking questions can help you make better decisions about your care. Be sure you understand what your treatment involves, including risks and benefits, and what the treatment will and will not do. Discuss the pros and cons of each decision with your doctor and consider his or her advice.

Talking with your doctor worksheet

Use the list below to track any changes in your life or health or to prepare for your visit with your doctor. Of course, not everything on this list will apply at every visit. However, you can use it as a starting point to jot down the things you want to discuss with your doctor.

Topic	Date	Notes
Your diet, lifestyle and medications		
Appetite changes		
Medicines		
Weight changes		
Your thoughts and feelings		
Feeling lonely or isolated		
Feeling sad, blue or down		
Problems sleeping		
Your overall health status		
Any current symptoms		
Issues or concerns		
Your everyday living		
Daily activities		
Living situation		
Exercise		

This form can help organize your thoughts for discussing your health concerns and questions with your doctor. Use the form to make a list (in order from most important to least important) of the things you want to discuss at your next appointment.

Appointment Details (Most important to least important)	
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
Notes	

Sources: Talking with Your Doctor. National Institutes on Aging, National Institutes of Health. American Medical Association.