

# Health Advice for Women

Although women are the largest consumers of health care in our nation, they are often subjected to insensitive, high priced and poor quality health care services. As a Clinical Nurse Specialist in Women's Health Care, I believe women can make significant changes in the type of health care they receive by considering the following suggestions:

1. Realize the power you have as consumers of health care. In most families, it is the woman who chooses the health care providers, makes the appointments, and encourages good health habits.

2. If you are choosing a physician, shop around! You wouldn't purchase any other type of service without investigating the costs, the investment of your time and whether or not this service will meet your needs.

3. Carefully investigate the workshops, seminars and non-credit courses which are offered in many institutions throughout the year. There are, unfortunately, many individuals who like to jump on the bandwagon of women's health issues such as premenstrual syndrome, weight

control, and childbirth education. Ask yourself: who are these people? Where do they come from? What makes them qualified in this area? Many call themselves "specialists." By whose standards? Find out! Don't assume that reputable institutions or agencies have checked the credentials or knowledge of these so called "experts."

4. Participate in your health care. Don't be intimidated by the paternalistic attitudes of some health care providers. Many women know their bodies and know when something is not right. Feel free to investigate possible causes and cures together with the person you have chosen to help you. If he/she does not appreciate your input, then ask yourself if this person will be able to meet your health needs. If not, feel free to find someone who can!

As women, we can make a real difference in the type and quality of health services offered. But we must take the responsibility for being assertive, investigating our options, and participating actively in our health care.

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