

Advocate for Yourself

Having a doctor you can trust is important but it is equally crucial that you take an active role in managing your own health and treatment plan(s). There are many things you can do to advocate for yourself and a quality physician will appreciate your initiative and welcome your approach.



Keep Track of Your Records

Just like logging your medical bills, you should also be keeping track of what is happening with your health. Prepare for your medical appointment by taking note of your concerns and bringing the list with you to the appointment. This will help reduce your anxiety before and during the visit and will help ensure you don't forget anything. If you get nervous or struggle to remember things, you can also take notes during the appointment. It may also benefit you to bring a trusted friend or family member with you. You can also ask the doctor if you may audio record the visit.

Do Your Research

Medical terminology can be extremely confusing. Rather than trying to make your own diagnosis before seeing the doctor, start by making a written list of your concerns and/or symptoms (such as pain, fever, swelling, etc), past treatment if any, and your health history for your doctor. When researching your health, use reputable websites like MayoClinic.org which contains facts on hundreds of conditions. If a website is set up to sell you something, look elsewhere.

Ask Questions

Remember that although your provider is an important part of your healthcare team, you are the ultimate authority. Don't be shy about asking questions making suggestions. You have a right to understand what is happening with your care and explaining this to you is an important part of your doctor's job. If you disagree with a treatment plan, then it is part of your job to address this with your doctor. Good care happens through good communication between the patient and the provider.

Get an Authorized Contact

An authorized contact can be a trusted friend or family member that helps you with your healthcare. You can give your provider/insurance company permission to share your information with this person such as medical records and test results. This person may also come with you to your appointments and assist you in completing paperwork or with filing an appeal. Another option is to establish a legal surrogate, who by law must be notified of your treatment plan, including any changes in treatment. Since a medical surrogate is a legal designation which provides specific authorities to the patient and surrogate, it is advisable to discuss this option with an attorney familiar with the legal aspects of medical decision making and end of life care.

Don't Give Up

You are the best spokesperson for your health and your body. Take an active role in your care. If you feel that something is wrong, do not settle until you get the answers. If your provider is unable to help you, get a second opinion.

Sincerely,

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