

March 9, 2020



## Del Norte Healthcare District Newsletter

This month's newsletter gives you tips on how to get the most benefit from your doctor appointments

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### How to get the most from your medical appointments

Have you ever left a medical appointment without all your questions answered, wishing you had more time to discuss your care, or wondering what the doctor said? If so, this article has tips on how to get the most out of your visit.

Preparation for a medical appointment begins before the visit. For a first visit, check that the office has your past medical records, if needed, before the visit. If you may need blood work drawn, ask if you need to stop eating and drinking before the visit.

The more organized your medical history, the more time you will have for questions. Prepare a summary of your medical history to give to the office. Your health summary should include:

- all active and past medical conditions
- prior surgeries
- allergies
- all prescription and non-prescription medications, supplements, and vitamins

Many patients don't realize that over the counter products often affect your treatment. For example, ibuprofen, Aleve, aspirin, vitamin E, turmeric, and fish oil are all blood thinners and often need to be stopped prior to surgery or beginning a new medication. Even a "baby" aspirin is a strong blood thinner when taken daily.

Be sure to arrive about 15 minutes before instructed by the doctor's office. Yes, people do get lost or stuck in traffic on their way to appointments. Have your up to date insurance card handy.

When possible, bring a friend or family member with you to the visit. You may not want to have that person in the room with you during an examination, but when the provider is explaining findings and making recommendations, a

second person is very helpful. Some offices allow recording of the visit, and recently a new smartphone app became available which records and then transcribes your doctor visit into written form, which you can print for your records (more on this technology in our next newsletter). Just be sure to ask permission before recording anything.

When you see the healthcare provider, provide him or her a list of questions you would like to address during the visit. Have two copies, one for you and one for the provider which can be entered into your record. It's much easier for the provider to answer questions during your visit than to have a patient call in later--which means the provider has to reopen your file, review your history and return your call. During your appointment, write down the answers to your questions for your records.

If there isn't enough time to address all your questions, ask the provider if you can make another appointment.

If your provider orders tests or procedures, ask which facilities can perform the tests. Patients can often save hundreds of dollars on blood tests, and thousands of dollars on imaging tests like MRI scans, by comparing charges at different facilities. Any licensed healthcare provider (doctor, nurse practitioner, physician assistant) can order medical tests at any licensed facility. (Patients can even order their own blood tests without a doctor visit, which we discuss in a future article).

Before leaving the office, be sure to understand "next steps" such as referrals, tests or procedures, and any instructions written down. Ask the office staff when you should expect to hear back from them, or when you need to contact them for follow up. If you have any tests or procedures done, be sure to schedule an appointment to review the results of those tests.

We hope this information helps you and your provider work together to improve your health!

For more information, or to provide ideas on how we can improve healthcare, please contact us at [www.delnortehealthcare.com](http://www.delnortehealthcare.com) or contact us via email at [dnhcd@delnortehealthcare.com](mailto:dnhcd@delnortehealthcare.com) or by phone at 707-464-9494. Doris Hendricks, our executive secretary, is available weekdays from 8 am to 12 noon.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

The Del Norte Healthcare District Board of Directors

Kevin Caldwell, M.D., Chair

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Dohn Henion

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