

HOW TO TALK WITH YOUR PHYSICIAN



UNC
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE



THE DOCTOR PATIENT RELATIONSHIP

The doctor-patient relationship requires a partnership between you and your physician. The following suggestions will help you be prepared and comfortable when meeting or speaking with your physician. Using the enclosed questionnaire will help both you and your doctor use your time more efficiently.

Some things you can do to help may include:

- Keep a diary that includes your pain episodes, stool patterns, diet, and the feelings and activities in your daily life that are associated with your GI symptoms. This can be a helpful tool that your doctor will discuss with you during your visit.
- Bring a list of any medications, allergies, current diagnoses that are being treated and any other information that could be important.
- Bring a list of questions and concerns related to your GI symptoms.
- Ask for written information which can be used to clarify what was discussed and may help you recognize other relevant issues to be discussed at your next appointment.
- If you feel that your questions or concerns are not being properly addressed, request a longer appointment.
- Write down the doctor's recommendations. If you need further explanations, the physician's assistant or nurse is usually able to spend time with you after the visit.
- Take responsibility for your disorder. The more information you acquire about your condition the better you can become at evaluating your treatment options.
- Be willing to discuss your own beliefs, perceptions, and concerns with your doctor.

MAKING A PHONE CALL

Sometimes issues or questions come up that require a phone call to your doctor. When calling to talk with your doctor, it often helps to have your questions clearly in mind or written out. If there are language or communication barriers, have someone with you who can talk directly to the doctor or health care professional. This assures clearer communication.

- Giving a number where you can be reached for a call-back can avoid missed calls.
- Ask when you should expect the return call.
- Ask when you should call back, if you don't get a call.
- Don't hesitate to call again, if you don't get a return call.

SHARING YOUR HISTORY WITH YOUR DOCTOR

Having your previous medical records sent to your doctor will help him/her know your history. Your doctor will also want to know your family history, especially if you have family members (blood relatives) who have had diseases that tend to run in families. These may include heart disease, hypertension, cancer, diabetes, blood diseases, lung or kidney problems.

Doctors would like to know about some habits that can affect your health:

- Smoking
- Alcohol consumption
- Drug use
- Exercise
- Work environment
- Stress level
- Marital status
- Living arrangements
- Number of children or dependents.

AVOIDING “GLITCHES”

Waiting for your doctor can be frustrating. If your doctor often runs late, ask if you can call in before you come, to see how he/she is doing and if you can arrive later. If you don't want to wait, ask what time of the day the doctor is more likely to be on schedule.

- Bringing those involved in your care with you can help them help you.
- Your doctor should also provide clearly written instructions and plans.
- You may need to sign a release if you want your doctor to talk to others involved in your care. Generally, family meetings should be done in your presence.
- If you are feeling uncomfortable with your care, or have any negative interactions with the staff, the doctor needs to know. In this way problems can be addressed and resolved.

IN SUMMARY

- Be responsible for your health care.
- Establish a partnership with your physician or health care professional.
- Keep a diary.
- Prepare for each appointment.

THE UNC CENTER FOR FUNCTIONAL GI & MOTILITY DISORDERS

For further information about IBS and other functional GI and motility disorders, please visit our website at www.med.unc.edu/ibs.

Our website also provides information regarding opportunities to participate in on-going research studies at UNC.



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To make an appointment at our clinic, please contact 919-966-0141

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