

PRESCRIPTION FOR A PRODUCTIVE HEALTHCARE VISIT

We come into this world seeing a doctor, and we continue to see a doctor until we reach the end of our journey. And while we're here, insurance companies dictate how long we get to spend each time we do see a doctor.

Use this checklist to get the most out of your doctor's visit:

- Write down on an index card all medications, including prescription and over-the-counter drugs, and diet supplements. Note the respective strengths and dosages. Keep the card accessible and up-to-date. Every doctor you see will ask for this information. You want to be accurate and consistent.
- Come prepared with a list of questions and concerns about your health in general and specifically about the condition for which you are seeking treatment.
- Have a family member or trusted friend accompany you into the examining room. You will have to filter a lot of information, so it helps to have an extra set of ears. Have the person take notes if possible.
- Ask about options for treatment including, alternative medicines and possible side effects.
- Ask about additional resources that might be available to you; for example, Internet web sites, studies, support groups.
- Have the doctor set your expectations as regards follow-up on what you have discussed today. When is the best time to call if you have additional questions? Will the doctor call you directly with test results? Is there an e-mail address that you can use for contact?
- Don't accept anything less than co-equal status. Don't allow yourself to be talked down to or patronized. If you are dissatisfied or uneasy over your interactions, change doctors without a second thought.
- Go with your gut. If your body is telling you there's something wrong, trust your instinct -- who knows your body better than you? Persist in finding the root cause; don't accept any suggestion that "it's in your head."
- Positive Outlook = Positive Outcome works. If you approach your consultation with a positive attitude and a sense of purpose, your doctor will respond in kind, and together you can work toward the desired result -- a healthier you.
- Laughter is a great stress reliever and ice breaker. Use humor in your interactions to humanize the experience with your doctor.