

How to Survive a Doctor's Appointment

Kellie Haigh is 25 years old. She lives in Oxford, Iowa.

I have been a disabled girl for the past ten years (fibromyalgia and migraines), and over that time, I have seen hundreds of doctors. Because of my disability, I have had to learn how to deal with making and going to doctor's appointments. Here are some of the things that I have learned along the way.

Step 1: Make the doctor's appointment at a good time of the day for you. Studies show that doctor's offices are not as busy first thing in the morning and right after lunch. In planning for what will work best for you, you should make the appointment at the time of the day that you are most likely to feel your best. For example, I am not a morning person, so even if my doctor is less busy in the morning, I am not going to make my appointment then. You can ask the person who is making the appointment for a certain time of day, and they should tell you what is available. Go when you are going to be at your best.

Step 2: Before the appointment, write down the reason for the visit or any questions that you have for the doctor. Is this just a check-up appointment? Then think about how you have been feeling before you go to the appointment so that you can tell the doctor. Do you have any questions about medications? Are there any other problems that you are having? Write these down before you go. It will be easier to remember everything that you want to talk about if you write it down.

Step 3: Do your homework. I have learned that I often get the best care from my doctor if I do my own research before the appointment. For example, if I am having a certain problem, I will often learn about the possible treatment options before the appointment. I will learn about these options by going online or looking at the library. By knowing about various treatments, I can better talk to my doctor during the appointment. I can also ask my doctor about certain treatments. As the patient, you do not have to do this research before the appointment, but I have found that I get better medical care if I look into the treatment options before I talk to my doctor.

Step 4: If possible, bring someone with you to the appointment. It is helpful to have someone with you at the appointment. This person can help you focus the conversation with the doctor. Also, the person can help you remember what the doctor says.

It is important to ask this person to not talk to others about what the doctor said or how the appointment went. Remind them they are there to support you.

Step 5: Know your info. When you go to the appointment, you will have to fill out forms with your health history, medications, and insurance information. Make sure that you know all of this information, or write it down and bring it with you.

Step 6: When the doctor comes into the exam room, tell the doctor that you want to talk with him/her before they start doing the exam. It can be hard to talk to the doctor about your questions or concerns while they are doing the exam. Say that you want to talk before the exam starts. Use this time to talk to the doctor about your questions or concerns that you wrote down and brought with you. Talking before the exam can also help make the exam more effective. This is because the doctor can know what to look for during the exam if you state your questions and concerns before the exam starts.

Step 7: Speak up if you have questions or don't understand. Your doctor is getting paid to work for you. The doctor is there to meet your needs and answer your questions, so make sure to speak up if you don't understand something. Don't be afraid to ask the doctor to slow down or explain something further. That's the doctor's job.

Step 8: Write down what your doctor says. It is hard to remember everything that the doctor says, so it is important to write it down. Don't be afraid to ask the doctor to stop for a moment so that you can take notes. Note taking is also a great job for the person who comes with you to the appointment.

Tips:

Remember that your doctor works for you. If your doctor does not treat you with respect or you don't like them, consider finding another doctor. You deserve to be treated with respect by your doctor.

You are probably going to have to wait for the doctor, so bring something to do. Bringing something to do makes waiting for your appointment with the doctor less frustrating. So bring something like a book, magazine, or music to listen to while you wait.

Best of luck to you at your next doctor's appointment!