

Preparing For Your Visit with Your Primary Care Physician (PCP)

Whether you are covered by Medicare (healthcare for seniors), commercial health insurance or even if you're just paying out of pocket, with a little bit of preparation, you can get more from an annual check-up than if you just "Show-up". Let us get you started by listing the topics and then we'll provide more insights into "why" these are important.

1. Get insurance info ready
2. List medications/supplements
3. Bring records from other doctors, clinics, or labs, including vaccinations
4. Write down your questions including changes since your last visit and other treatments
5. Be prepared for their questions

And "why should you do that?"

1. Make sure you have your insurance card/documents. You'll be asked during check-in to show your insurance and confirm your address and other information, so have your card (or another document) available.
2. Write down each of the medications you're taking.
 - a. Don't assume your doc has everything in their records, even if they're the only prescriber. For one thing, they don't have any way to know which ones you're taking versus what they prescribed but you can't/won't take.
 - b. Don't forget NON-prescription medications and supplements or vitamins.
 - c. Write-down any "natural" or homeopathic treatments. Some people take large doses of cinnamon, cumin, or other herbs. Listing them doesn't mean they're not safe, but they might interact with other treatments your provider may suggest.
 - d. **THIS IS NOT THE TIME TO KEEP SECRETS!** If you have ANY other drugs you're taking, like a prescription for E-D medication from an on-line provider or you take CBD/Canabis "gummies", you really should disclose it to your doctor.
3. If you have seen ANY OTHER healthcare providers, like an urgent-care, company nurse, mental health provider who prescribed medication, or vaccine clinic, bring what records you have.
 - a. Did you get a flu shot? When was it?
 - b. Any COVID-19 vaccinations and boosters?
4. Prepare a list of questions or general topics that you would like to discuss. This might include things like:
 - a. "Everything seems fine but is there more I should be doing?"
 - b. "It's not that big of a deal, but sometimes my ???? hurts and I don't know why."
 - c. My friend/relative says I should be taking ???? or using ???? treatments. Is that a good idea?
 - d. This mole seems like it's changing. Is it something to be concerned about?

These types of questions are important because many treatments are "long-term". Like keeping an eye on moles and taking preventative medications, even though you "feel good" right now.

Annual Wellness Visit



It's also important to let your doc or PA (physician assistant) give you their perspective on your specific situation. You may be hearing things at work or from well-intentioned family members, like "Oh, don't take Lipitor, just try to eat fewer eggs. Your cousin Eddy gained 50 pounds after taking that!" These types of stories are likely just nonsense, so it's good to hear a professional opinion.

It's also a good idea to ask about treatments you've heard about and wonder if it would be good for you. For example, if you're diabetic, many doctors recommend that you ALSO get treated to prevent heart-attack/strokes with both a "statin" and an ACE/ARB. What are your doc's opinions on this? (Or whatever conditions you may have.)

5. You're probably going to be asked some "behavioral" questions, like "how often do you exercise?", "do you smoke?", "How many drinks do you have each week?", "Do you use any recreational drugs?". So, you should be prepared to answer them. This can be a little uncomfortable, you may be worried about "confessing" something that could be held against you or making you appear like you're a drunk. The point is NOT to make you feel bad, but to make sure your doc knows the things that could be impacting your health. Lying to make yourself "look better" could be bad for you, even potentially fatal.

About allergies: keep a list of drugs and environmental triggers that you've had allergic reactions to. Make sure your doctor is aware of them BEFORE prescribing you any medications or recommending any treatments.

Example

List of drugs, vitamins, and homeopathic remedies to discuss with your doctor.

Medication/Remedy Name	Dosage	How often you take it?	Comments / Questions
Atorvastatin	10mg	Daily at bedtime	
Multi-vitamin	2 tablets	With breakfast	
Tums	1 to 4 tablets	Whenever I feel heartburn	It's gotten a little worse since last year
Cinnamon	1 tablespoon	With my oatmeal	Tastes awful, but my cousin swears it will "reverse" diabetes, I guess it doesn't hurt

