

Make the **Most** of your **Doctor Visits**

A Guide to Productive Office Visits

Visits to the doctor are usually brief, and they can leave us feeling overwhelmed and confused. With a little preparation, you can make the most of these visits. The following information will help you be an informed, confident healthcare consumer ready to take charge of your care.

Getting Ready for Your Appointment

Make a list to take along

You'll find a convenient worksheet on the back of this brochure. If you prefer to make your own list, here are some things to include:

- **The questions you want to ask.** They might include things like why am I feeling this way, how am I doing, or what else can I be doing to feel better?
- **What you need to tell or show your provider.** This could include symptoms, family history, or exposure to other people who've been ill.
- **All medications and supplements you currently take.** That includes over-the-counter medications, vitamins, and herbal remedies. Better

yet, bring all these items with you so your doctor can see the labels.

- **Any allergies you have,** including bad reactions you've had to medications.

Think about asking someone to go with you

Consider taking a trusted friend or family member with you, especially if you feel ill or have serious health problems. This person can help listen, take notes, and help you remember what was said.

Check your insurance benefits

Familiarize yourself with your health insurance benefits before your visit so you won't be surprised when you receive your explanation of benefits statement or provider's bill. Some services fall under preventive care, while others are considered diagnostic

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Here are some simple suggestions to help you maximize your health benefits at your next doctor's appointment.



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imaging, office visits, or outpatient services. All may have different benefit levels, copayments, and coinsurance. Your benefit summary or member handbook (available online through InTouch for Members at PacificSource.com) is a source of information, and you are always welcome to call us.

Different benefits, copayments, and coinsurance may apply to services. Remember, more treatment doesn't always mean better care.

Contact our Customer Service Department if you have any questions: 800.688.5008 or e-mail cs@pacificsource.com.

During Your Appointment

- **Explain why you're there.** Make sure your provider understands why you made this appointment.
- **Answer the doctor's questions.** Your clear and complete answers help the doctor figure out what might be going on.
- **Listen to your doctor's diagnosis** and recommendations about what to do next. Do you understand what your provider is telling you? If questions come up, write them down.
- **Ask questions about any medications, tests, or procedures your doctor recommends.** Different benefits, copayments, and coinsurance may apply to these services. Remember, more treatment doesn't always mean better care. It's smart to ask about costs, risks, side effects, alternative treatment options, and what the doctor expects to learn from the procedure. For prescription drugs, ask your doctor to prescribe generics whenever possible.
- **Ask any remaining questions from your list.** Ask anything your doctor hasn't already answered, and take notes.
- **Know what happens next.** Before you leave, make sure you're clear about the next steps and when they need to happen.

Follow Through

- **Do your part.** You agreed to do something: come in for a test, schedule a follow-up appointment, try a new medication. Be sure to follow through.
- **Watch for possible problems.** For your safety, be alert in the hours and days after you start a new medication or treatment. If you notice any new symptoms or problems, let your doctor know right away.
- **Call back if you need to.** If you have new questions or concerns, call your doctor's office. If you were expecting to get test results or schedule tests and haven't heard from anyone, call the doctor's office.

Use PacificSource as a Resource

Contact us with questions about your benefits, providers, or claims. Our Customer Service staff can:

- Tell you if a service is covered and what your share of the cost will be.
- Let you know whether a surgery, procedure, or medication requires preauthorization, and whether that has been completed.
- Help you find a participating provider.
- Answer your questions about a claim or Explanation of Benefits statement.
- Put you in touch with a Nurse Case Manager or condition management program to help with any ongoing medical needs.

How to Ask Questions

Many people hold back on asking questions during their medical appointments. Some are embarrassed or think it will take too much time. Or they're not sure what to say.



Asking questions can be hard. But remember, it's your body. You need—and deserve—to understand what your doctor or other health professional is telling you.

- Take your time and think about what the doctor has said.
- Ask questions that will help you clearly understand the diagnosis.
- Refer to your list of questions, or use the worksheet on the back of this brochure to guide you.



More Ways to Ask for Information

If you don't understand the answers to your initial questions, here are some ways to ask again:

- Excuse me. I didn't fully understand what you just said. Would you please go over it again?
- I'm sorry, but I still don't really get that. Could you explain it in a different way?
- I'm not sure I understand the reason for that test. What will we learn from doing it?
- I'm still not clear on my treatment options. Could you write them down for me?

**See back page for our
Doctor Office Visit Worksheet.**



Direct: 208.333.1596
Toll Free: 800.688.5008

PacificSource.com

Doctor Office Visit Worksheet

Use this form as a guide, so you won't forget important information you want to discuss with your doctor.

Doctor's name:

Date of office visit:

Complete this section **before** your appointment.

Questions or concerns you want to discuss (symptoms, when you first noticed them, relevant family history, etc.):

Any prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications, or supplements you are currently taking, plus any allergies:

Complete the following sections **during** your appointment.

If your doctor recommends medication, tests, screenings, or procedures:

Diagnosis or condition being treated?

Name of the medication, test, or procedure?

Why do I need recommended treatment or test?

What happens if I do nothing?

What are the risks?

Are these tests routine or diagnostic?

Are there alternatives?

How do I prepare?

If your doctor writes a prescription:

What is the name of the medication?

Is a generic available? Can I take the generic version?

At the end of the visit, ask:

Do I need to return for another visit?

Can I phone in for test results?

When do I need to report back about my condition?

What danger signs should I look for?

What else do I need to know?