How to Navigate Your Way to a Meaningful Doctor’s Appointment

Have you ever left a doctor’s appointment more worried or confused than when you first entered the room? Do you often feel rushed and overwhelmed with the information provided during that visit? Perhaps there was information you wanted to share with your doctor, but you couldn’t find the right words or the right time to share.

These are just some of the concerns that many people have when it comes to visiting their doctor. While it’s important to bring a current medication list and insurance information to your visit, what else can you do to ensure your visit is a success? How do you navigate the vast ocean of healthcare to ensure smooth sailing during your appointment?

Here are some tips to help you on your voyage.

Check your attitude and feelings about the appointment. If you are having a lot of anxiety about your appointment, it can be difficult for you to talk openly and honestly with your doctor.

• Take a few minutes before you enter your doctor’s office. Maybe sit in your car or the waiting room and close your eyes, clear your mind, and imagine how you would like your appointment to go. Positive self-talk is a great way to energize yourself before walking into the room.
• Remember to talk kindly to yourself. The fact that you are at your doctor’s office for a visit is a sign that you are an active participant in your healthcare.

Make a list of the things you want to talk about. Think of what you really want to accomplish during your visit. Are you looking for help in a particular area of your health, or are you concerned about a recent illness or test results?

• Go over your list the day before and the day of your appointment.
• You may not get to the entire list, but you can save it for next time.
• Having a list to refer to may help if you are nervous or unsure of what to say, or don’t want to forget.

Write down your strategies. Note what you are doing well, what you’ve tried in the past, and what has or has not worked for you. This is very helpful when you and your doctor are setting goals.

• Finding out what strategies work for you is important. It is easier to tackle an issue if you are prepared. Using your strengths can help you achieve your goals.

Continued inside.

Interested in working with a health coach?
Learn more at PacificSource.com/member/condition-support-program, or email us at yoursupport@pacificsource.com.

Find Our Newsletter Online! Find this issue, as well as links to resources on our website. Simply visit PacificSource.com/member/condition-support-program.

RealLife-Winter-2013-v4

Winter 2013

888.987.5805
yoursupport@pacificsource.com
PacificSource.com
Continued from page 1

Success Corner

Want to be inspired? Then meet Virginia!

Virginia started working with our Condition Support healthcare team in February, 2013 to get the upper hand on her diabetes. At that time her A1C (a test that shows average blood sugar readings for diabetics) was 10.7. The target A1C for most adults with diabetes is 7 or lower.

Since she watched a parent suffer from uncontrolled diabetes, Virginia is well aware of the risk of her diabetes. As the matriarch of her family, she is highly motivated to find a way to get her blood sugars into a healthy range and keep them there. “I want to be around for my kids, grandkids, and great grandkids.”

Through a combination of hard work, determination, and talking with a Condition Support nurse and dietitian—eight months later Virginia has had phenomenal success. She found a healthcare provider who specializes in diabetes and is working with her to find the best medication and treatment plan. Virginia says she is “paying attention to everything I put in my mouth,” taking her medications as prescribed, and testing her blood sugars six times a day.

The payoff? “It feels really good” states Virginia. Her most recent A1C dropped to 8.2 and now her 30-day average blood sugar reading is 148—suggesting an on-target A1C between 6-7!

When asked what she thought about the Condition Support program, she said “The best part of the program is the communication which gave me the motivation to keep trying. It’s motivating to know that there’s someone out there who cares and is actually keeping tabs on you.”

“I want to be around for my kids, grandkids, and great grandkids.”

—Virginia, program participant

What is health literacy?
The definition of health literacy is the ability to read, understand, and use healthcare information to make decisions and follow instructions for treatment.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, only 12 percent of adults in the United States have proficient health literacy—and that can have serious consequences for health.

If you don’t understand something your doctor tells you about your medication, a test, or a procedure, ask questions. Your provider or pharmacist will welcome your interest to understand your healthcare better.

• For example, if your goal is to monitor your blood sugar more carefully, what are some ways you can make sure that happens? Do you need to have a spare meter for home or work? Do you need to set a reminder on your calendar?

Ask for help. This lets you access the right resources so that you can accomplish your goal. While you are the expert when it comes to your habits and body, your doctor has years of training, education, and experience. You can benefit from this knowledge and work together toward your common healthcare goals.

• Ask your doctor what help is available from their practice. Do you need a referral to a dietitian or a nurse care manager?

• Is your doctor part of a medical home or patient-centered care team? This is a team-based healthcare delivery model that provides comprehensive and continuous medical care with the goal of obtaining maximized health outcomes.

Play it straight. Be open and honest with your doctor. Having all of the facts about your medical history and your current health helps your doctor make recommendations that are safe and effective.

If you have areas of your health that you are hesitant to share with your doctor, ask yourself if they could affect the way your doctor is treating you.

Ask questions if you don’t understand something. If your doctor has ordered tests or x-rays, be sure you understand why they are being ordered and what the next step is. If you are having anxiety about a procedure or a test, it is more likely you won’t take the steps to have it done. A recent study by the Mayo clinic suggests that the more empowered a patient feels about their course of treatment, they more likely they are to be motivated and take an active role in managing their health.

Make a plan. Before you leave your appointment, know what the next step is. Will your doctor call you with the results, or are you going to check in with the office in the next couple of days? Do you need to schedule a follow-up appointment or are you going to communicate with your doctor by phone or email?

• Taking an active role in the plan is important. If you are struggling or having difficulty following through, notify your doctor or the staff.

• Follow up with your doctor—even if you haven’t done everything that was asked or you’re still working toward your goal, it is still important to follow up.

• It may be harder to connect with your doctor after you leave the appointment, so if you still have questions, ask your doctor how to contact him.

Collaboration, brainstorming, goal setting, and most importantly, following up with your doctor may lead to improved health and a great sense of satisfaction with your healthcare. While you are the captain of your healthcare ship, it is nice to have a knowledgeable and willing partner to accompany you on your journey.
Quiet Your Mind and Protect Your Body with Yoga

Looking for some indoor activities to do during the wintery weather? This is the perfect time to learn more about yoga. Yoga has proven health benefits and can be done indoors where it's warm and dry—why not stretch yourself and give it a try?

A regular yoga practice has many potential health benefits, such as:

- It improves flexibility and range of motion, which helps protect you from injuries.
- It increases muscular strength, endurance, and balance.
- It helps you release tension and quiet your mind, which reduced stress and anxiety.
- Yoga breathing practices show promise in improving episodes of difficult breathing for patients with lung conditions such as COPD, in part by reducing anxiety.
- It lowers blood pressure. One recent study found that a gentle yoga practice 2-3 times per week for 6 months significantly lowered blood pressure within 3 months.
- It may alleviate chronic conditions such as depression, pain, anxiety, and insomnia.
- It may help alleviate low back pain.

We asked our PacificSource employee wellness specialist and certified YogaFit instructor Sally Cummings, who has been practicing yoga for 15 years, how to start a yoga practice. For beginners, Sally recommends looking for a gentle basic yoga class at a community center or through a hospital based class before seeking out a specific yoga discipline at a studio. You can search for qualified instructors by zip code at Yogaalliance.org. The Yoga Alliance is considered one of the most reputable credentialing organizations for yoga instructors.

Here are some questions to ask when exploring which class might be right for you:

1) Share your health concerns and conditions with the instructor, such as high blood pressure, a heart condition, or back concerns. Ask if this specific class is right for you—given your health conditions.

2) Ask the instructor if he/she has experience working with students with your needs or health concerns. Can they recommend alternative poses to work with your health issues?

3) Ask if this class is appropriate for your skill level.

4) Ask about the type of yoga class. Is it a gentle yoga focused on stretching and breathing, or is it an athletic style yoga? Athletic yoga classes may be too advanced for a beginner with health conditions.

5) What clothing and equipment suggestions does the instructor have?

Yoga is generally safe for most healthy people when practiced under the guidance of a trained instructor. If you have a health condition, definitely talk with your healthcare provider before you begin to make sure you’re getting benefit, not harm, from yoga practice.

When asked what keeps Sally coming back for more yoga, she said, “It calms me like nothing else. After a yoga session I feel very centered, calm and relaxed.” For someone who leads a very active lifestyle, she also says “it’s the best thing I’ve ever done to strengthen my core and it provides the balance I need for all the activities I do.”

Sally’s words of wisdom for yoga beginners: “As with learning any new activity, be patient with yourself and listen to your own body. Work within your own capabilities.”

Keep Tabs on Your Diabetes with Regular Exams and Testing

Are you due for your comprehensive diabetes care exam? Talk with your doctor about what tests you may need, including an eye exam, A1C testing, cholesterol screening, and tests for your kidneys.

Also, keeping track of your daily blood glucose readings is an important piece of your diabetes care plan. Staying current with your exams and testing is a great way to help control your diabetes.
**Ginger-Cider Roasted Veggies**
Makes about 6 servings (about 3/4 cup per serving)

**Ingredients**
- 3 pounds of a variety of root vegetables (we used rutabaga, carrots, and golden beets)
- 1 inch fresh ginger root, peeled and sliced
- 1 cup apple cider (or apple juice)
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon fresh ground black pepper
- 1/2 cup chopped walnuts
- 1 tablespoon butter or margarine (with no hydrogenated fats)
- 1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon

**Instructions**
1. Preheat oven to 400 F.
2. Cut root vegetables into 1-inch pieces and place in a 9x13 baking dish, add the ginger slices.
3. Combine cider, brown sugar, salt and pepper, and mix until sugar is dissolved.
4. Pour cider mix onto vegetables and toss to coat well.
5. Cover the dish with foil and bake for 20 minutes.
6. Remove cover and continue to roast vegetables, stirring every 20 minutes.
7. Continue to roast until the vegetables are tender and most of the liquid has been reduced.
8. While the vegetables are roasting, toast the walnuts on medium-low in a small skillet. Stir constantly until toasted lightly brown (about 5 minutes). Nuts can burn quickly so stir constantly and remove from heat quickly.
9. Once you have removed the nuts from the heat, add in the butter and cinnamon, and mix to combine. Transfer to a plate to cool a bit while the vegetables finish roasting.
10. When vegetables are finished roasting, transfer them to a serving dish and sprinkle with the cinnamon walnuts.

Delicious!

Root vegetables you might want to use: beets, carrots, celeriac, parsnips, rutabaga, turnips, daikon, Jerusalem artichoke, yams, or kohlrabi.

Adapted from Eatingwell.com.

**Nutrition Facts**
- Serving Size: 1 serving ~ 3/4 cup
- Servings: 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount Per Serving</th>
<th>Calories: 210</th>
<th>Calories from Fat: 80%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Fat</strong></td>
<td>3g</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated Fat</td>
<td>2g</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans Fat</td>
<td>0g</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholesterol</td>
<td>5mg</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium</td>
<td>340mg</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Carbohydrate</strong></td>
<td>31g</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dietary Fiber</td>
<td>7g</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugars</td>
<td>22g</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protein</strong></td>
<td>4g</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vitamin A: 250% • Vitamin C: 45%
Calcium: 10% • Iron: 8%

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.*