Tips for preparing for a Doctor Visit, ER or Urgent Care Visit

Create a medical file to take with you—physical folder or files on our phone/table

(*Tip: Always make copies to hand to your doctor)

Your folder should contain:

* Age/Date of Birth
* Medical History including:
  * Immunizations
  * Past diagnosis/date
  * Past hospitalization/reason/date
  * Past surgeries/dates
  * Medical allergies
  * Any family history of medical/genetic problems—try to know exactly, before visit
* Current medical problems/issues
  * Doctors you are seeing/have seen and dates
  * Current medication list
  * Current social situation (married? Employment? Living where? Insurance?)
  * Smoker? How long?
  * Alcohol intake?

In addition, take a list of issues/concerns you want to discuss

(*Tip: Prioritize your list as you may be able to discuss only 1 or 2 things)

Provide a description of the problem, including:

* How long you have had it
* Any known cause
* Onset—rapid or gradual
* Location exactly
* All symptoms related
* How does this effect functioning? Work? Eating? Sleep?
* What have you tried for it
* Labs/work up already
* What works/helps? What doesn’t?
* What do you think is the cause? Why
* If you have searched the internet make a copy of the things you found so doctor can understand
When calling to make an appointment

(*Tip: Look at office website for information)

- Explain to receptionist what you want to be seen for, ask them how long of a visit it should be
- Have all records send to office, ask how to do this. (Call a few days before to see if this has happened before your visit)
- Make copy of your records for doctor
- Consider taking someone with you
- Make a list of things you want to make sure you ask and have answered before you leave
- Try to be seen 1st thing in the AM or 1st available after lunch
  * More likely to be on time and have time

The day of your appointment

- Make sure you check in
- If not called to see doctor within 15-20 minute ask to make sure you are in the system
- Ask how long of a wait
- **Appointments are made for 15-30 minute slots – you may have to wait**
- If you are taking autistic/difficult behavioral person, let office know (*ask how they best can decrease wait time

When you see the doctor:

- Give history to them
- Tell them you have a list of concerns and what you want to know today
- If you don’t understand what they are asking you or telling you, TELL THEM!!
- Be as clear as you can – be aware of the time
  * Usual visit consists of:
    - Subjective information gathering
    - Objective findings – examination – if you are uncomfortable with ANY part of this, let them know
    - Assessment – may need lab/radiology/consultation or referral
    - Plan: If medication given make sure you understand why/what to expect and side effects to watch for
      * If labs/radiology – ask when you should follow up.
        * How to follow up. Do they have a patient portal?
    - If you can’t pay for medication, let them know
    - If you need transportation, let them know
    - If a prior authorization is necessary ask how long this should take – can call your insurance company for the info as well

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