



# Teamwork: Be Your Provider's Partner

## Information and Resources to Help Make the Most of Your Visit

*Have you ever come out of an appointment with your health care provider and felt you didn't understand what was said? Have you ever left a doctor's appointment with a list of questions that were not answered?*

*We are each responsible for taking charge of our own health by learning to work as a team with our health care provider.*

*Your provider may only have a brief time to spend with you. To use that time together to your advantage, it is good to prepare for your visit ahead of time.*

### Communication is the Key

*Just as a good provider must listen carefully to you, you must learn to communicate clearly with your provider.*

*To get the most from your visit, try some of these tips.*

### Before the Visit/Getting Ready for Your Appointment

- Complete all the paperwork that is given to you or mailed to you.
- Think about what you want to know about your health. Write down the questions you want to ask. List one or two of your most pressing concerns.
- Write down the answers to the following questions:
  - Describe the problem or symptoms. Where is it? When did it start?
  - Does anyone else at home have the same problem?
  - What do you think is causing it? What have you tried? Did it work?
  - Do you have any pain? If so, where and what type of pain? How long does it last?
  - Have you recently begun a diet or started exercising? Have you lost weight?
- Be as accurate as possible. Don't exaggerate, understate or leave facts out.

### The Day of the Visit

- Follow any instructions you are given - especially if you are told not to eat or drink before your appointment.
- Bring a list of all your medications, including any herbs and nutritional supplements you may be taking. Include the name, strength or dose amount, and number of pills you take each time, what time(s) of day you take them.
- Bring any logs, diaries or records of your symptoms that you have kept.
- Wear clothing that is easy to take off and put on.
- Be on time and be sure to check in.
- Bring something to do or read while in the waiting room.
- Bring a paper and pen to take notes. Remember to bring/wear your glasses and/or hearing aid(s).

### The Appointment

- If you think you might have trouble understanding or hearing, consider bringing a relative or friend to help you ask questions.
- Repeat what the provider says to you in your own words to be sure you understand.
- Keep the conversation on track. Focus on the questions that matter to you.
- Tell the provider if you don't understand. It's okay to say, "wait a minute, I don't get it," or to ask what a word means.

### Closing the Visit

- What is the next step in your care? Let the provider know if you cannot or will not do what is suggested.
- Ask for written information about your medication(s), condition, illness and treatment. Make sure you know exactly how to take your medication(s), including the time of day you should take it/them.
- If you have more to discuss with your provider than time permits, ask for another appointment.
- Make sure you know who to call if you have questions or concerns. Call your provider if you think of something you forgot to ask during your appointment.
- Don't leave without understanding what to do to be as healthy as possible.



