

HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OUT OF A DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENT

By Cynthia Macluskie

Before the appointment:

1. Research your concerns. Make a list of reasons why this applies to your child and what tests you would like done. Make this concise so that you can use your time wisely.
2. If you are seeing a specialist, try to have basic tests run by your pediatrician so that you have all preliminary tests done and make the appointment more productive.
3. Keep a health journal. Summarize it in a one page bullet point sheet so the doctor has an accurate health history. Be sure to summarize concisely so that you do not take more than 2 to 5 minutes.
4. Arrange for a hab worker, friend or spouse to take with you to the appointment. One person should be in charge of the child and the other in charge of communicating with the doctor.
5. Make a list of all medicines and supplements your child is currently taking including dosage.
6. Write a goal of what you want out of the appointment.
7. Write a list of questions you need to discuss.
8. Make sure you bring all records the doctor might need to review. I.e. lab tests.
9. Make sure you have your insurance card and you have spoken to the office to ensure that all other paperwork needed for the appointment is filled out.

At the appointment.

1. Be concise and direct.
2. Be an active participant in the appointment.
3. Make sure to be unemotional. Most doctors do not handle emotionality well and will dismiss you in their mind if you are overly emotional.
4. When the doctor asks you how your child is doing do not answer fine!!! Give a short list of your concerns.
5. If the condition is related to autism have a copy of the study that shows this is common with kids with autism. I.e. Seizures. Bring a study showing that 25-40 percent of kids with autism have this and your list of reasons you believe your child might be having seizures.
6. If the condition has nothing to do with autism make sure you state that you are seeing the doctor for a specific problem and that it is not related to autism.
7. Ask detailed questions.
8. If the doctor suggests a test, depending on the test ask the following questions?
 - a. What does the test measure?
 - b. Why do I need it?
 - c. Will my insurance pay for it?
 - d. How accurate is the test?
 - e. How is the test performed and how much discomfort will there be?
 - f. How should I prepare for the test?
 - g. When will I get the results?
 - h. Which lab is processing the tests and why did you choose that one?
(Check to see that it is accredited by the Joint Commission at www.jcaho.org or by the College of American Pathologists at www.cap.org.)
 - i. What is the ideal result that I want to get on this test?
 - j. When will I get the results? How will the results be shared with me?
9. Wants to prescribe a medication? Ask the following:

- a. What is this medicine for?
- b. Does this medication replace anything my child is already taking?
- c. How does my child take this medication? i.e. on an empty stomach or a certain time of day
- d. How long will my child need to take this?
- e. What are the side effects?
- f. Is this a new drug on the market?
- g. What are the odds that my child may be allergic? What symptoms should I look for?
- h. Is this medicine safe to take with other medicines or supplements my child already taking?

Diagnosis... Depending on what it is ask the following questions?

1. How do you know my child has this condition? How was it diagnosed?
2. What does this condition mean for my child's overall health?
3. Can it be treated? Does it have to be treated? What happens if I do not treat it?
4. Should you conduct further tests to confirm the diagnosis? If you do, what are those tests necessary? What kinds of side effects or risks do they involve?
5. What treatment options do we have to choose from? What are the pros and cons?
6. What are the benefits of seeking a second opinion?
7. How can I find out more information about his condition or disease?
8. Is there anything I can do to help control the condition?
9. Who is the best in the world at treating this?
10. Are there any clinical trails under way for this condition or disease?
11. Where would you go or what would you do to treat this condition if this was you or someone in your family?

Other ideas?

1. If the doctor is too busy to answer all of your questions make another appointment to specifically go over your questions?
2. If you are seeing a DAN doctor make sure you fax a copy of what you want to go over to the office before the appointment.
3. Keep to the subject. Do not deviate from why you are there. Do not have personal conversations or look for emotional support. Do not allow doctors to chit chat with you either. Time is precious and you do not want to waste it. Specialists are busy and DAN doctors charge by the minute practically so chit chat is not productive.
4. The Emily center will do the research for you. If your child is diagnosed with a condition or disease you can call their office and they will do the research and send you a packet of information.
5. You are always free to get a second opinion and should if the following is true:
 - a. You child needs surgery.
 - b. Your doctor can not make a diagnosis.
 - c. Your doctor is not a specialist.
 - d. The treatment is not working after a reasonable amount of time.
 - e. Your doctor is not taking your child's symptoms seriously enough.

A great deal of information for this presentation was taken from "You! the smart patient an insiders handbook for getting the best treatment" by Michael Roizen, MD and Mehmet Oz, MD. This is a great book and worth reading and owning!