



# The Patient's Role on the Health Care Team



## ■ Your Input Is Crucial

Your doctor is committed to providing you with accurate diagnoses and effective treatments. Your doctor counts on you to give him or her an accurate medical history and to participate in your own health care. This information includes special social or cultural customs or beliefs.

## ■ Write It Down

Most of us have ready access to all sorts of data about diseases, diets, and health treatments, via the Internet, radio, and newspapers and magazines. While such health information can be very helpful, sometimes it may be incomplete or inaccurate. Write down what you have heard or read – it will help your doctor address your specific concerns when you discuss your health care.



## ■ Ask Questions

Asking questions about your health care is one of the most important ways to keep yourself involved. Ask questions not only when you don't understand, but when you have doubts or concerns.

Before you have any procedure or test performed, make sure you know the process of the test or procedure, the risks, and what the results will tell you and your doctor. If you do not receive the results in the expected amount of time, call your doctor. Don't assume the results are normal because you haven't heard anything. If, for any reason, you are unable to receive the test or procedure, notify your doctor's office. Your doctor will note that in your chart, and it will help both of you remember to reschedule the test or procedure as soon as you are able.



## ■ Know Your Medications

Occasionally, an up-to-date medication list will not be available at the time of your encounter. It is a good idea to keep a list of all the medicines you take and to bring that list with you to the doctor. The list should include the dosages of your medications and when you typically take them.

It is important to include on your medications list any allergies or reactions you have had to medications. The list should also include any non-prescription drugs and herbal medicines you take.

## ■ Understand Your Medications

If your doctor writes a prescription for you, make sure you can read it – it is important that you know the name and dosage of the medicine you will be taking. If you cannot read the prescription, ask your doctor to rewrite the name of the medication, the strength, and dosing instructions. Ask your doctor if a generic substitution is acceptable, and the name of the generic medication. When you pick up the medicine from the pharmacy, double check the label to make sure you have received the correct medication and dosage, and that the directions on the label are the same as those your doctor prescribed.

Always let your doctor know if the medication causes uncomfortable side effects.

## ■ Make Healthy Choices



Participating in your own health care includes making healthy lifestyle choices. Your doctor does everything he or she can to keep you healthy, but he





or she has little control over the lifestyle choices *you* make. Your doctor can provide you with information regarding the benefits of a healthy diet and daily exercise, as well as the risks of smoking and resources to help you quit. Healthy lifestyle choices also include making sure you receive yearly or other regularly scheduled tests that your doctor recommends (such as annual mammograms for women over 40). Taking your medications as prescribed also helps ensure your long-term health.

## **Speak up!**

Even after you have agreed with your doctor on a treatment plan, you should continue to speak up if you feel the plan isn't working for you. Everyone's body is different, and can respond differently to the same interventions. Keep the lines of communication open between you and your doctor throughout your health care relationship. ■

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