

HOW TO HELP SENIORS MAKE THE MOST OF DOCTOR VISITS



Doctor Visits

Preparing Seniors for Doctor Visits

Getting to a doctor visit, as well as understanding and implementing medical advice, can be a challenge for seniors.

Aging involves changes in health, physical ability, and medical risks. On average, older adults in the US tend to be in a healthcare setting about 17 days a year. Given how common (and often necessary) it is for seniors to interact with doctors, it is important to help seniors navigate doctor visits well. ([Forbes](#))

A Start-to-Finish Doctor Visit Checklist

For many seniors, doctor's visits are stressful. Use this checklist to help ease anxiety.



Arrange transportation to and from appointments



Identify whether or not a companion is necessary for the visit



Check if the appointment or associated tests require seniors to contact their insurance company ahead of time for pre-certification or other purposes



Pack everything needed for a successful appointment:

- Insurance cards
- Photo ID
- Payment for co-pays or other charges
- Contact information for other doctors
- List of current medications
- List of allergies/medical conditions
- Medical records, if needed
- A list of questions for the doctor
- A notepad or device for note-taking



Verify at checkout after the appointment:

- If further testing or labs are required
- When new prescriptions should be picked up
- If there are instructions or treatment notes seniors can take home with them
- When follow-up appointments are scheduled
- If any payment is due

(Fit after Fifty)

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How to Help Seniors Advocate for Themselves

Often, seniors feel nervous or powerless when in healthcare settings. Encourage seniors to attend their appointments confidently and to speak up for themselves. Remind seniors to:

- Bring glasses or hearing aids if necessary to support effective communication
- Prepare to share what has been going on in their lives and to ask questions
- Ask for directions, diagnoses, and notes about the appointment in writing
- Get a second opinion if they are uncomfortable or unsure of something a doctor says
- Take a family member or close friend for support if self-advocacy is challenging for them

(NIA)



Home Care Tip

Help seniors who are active online to understand that the Web does not have a medical degree. While medical information can be helpful to reference and understand more about health, only professionals with education and training should make diagnoses and prescribe treatments.

Tips to See the Doctor Less Often

Following doctor's instructions and taking care of oneself are great ways for seniors to reduce the number of appointments they attend. There are also alternatives to traditional doctor visits that seniors can benefit from, such as:

- Web-based medical services
- Virtual or over-the-phone appointments
- Retail clinics, especially for flu shots or common, minor illnesses
- Urgent care centers

(WebMD)

Cyclical Reasons Seniors Should See The Doctor

One of the reasons aging adults tend to see doctors often is for cyclical treatments, check-ups, or preventative care. For instance, seniors should plan on:

- Annual check-ups
- A colonoscopy every decade
- Annual vaccinations
- Regular eye exams
- Dental exams twice a year
- Screenings for cancer, thyroid disorders, etc.

(Healthline)