

10 TIPS FOR UNDERSTANDING YOUR DOCTOR

Have you ever left the doctor's office and wondered "What in the world did he just say?" If so, you aren't alone. Even if you felt like you understood what your doctor was telling you at your doctor's visit, it may not all make sense by the time you get home. Nine out of ten people do not understand health care. Let's face it, it's complicated. Health Care literacy is not only about reading. It is about understanding difficult health terms and issues. Even highly educated people can have trouble understanding health care information. Limited health literacy can literally harm your health.

Ten tools to help communicate with your doctor:

1. Communicate with your Doctor's office. Verify they have test results and medical records for your visit. Have another adult with you. Let the doctor's office know you need an interpreter if you don't speak or understand English very well.
2. List your symptoms and write a list of questions and concerns before your doctor's visit. Your doctor can only work with the information you provide. If you don't tell your doctor everything, he won't be able to diagnose you correctly.
3. Bring a list of your medications to your next doctor's visit.
4. Ask questions.
5. Repeat information back to your doctor or nurse.
6. Write down instructions and information your doctor gives you before you leave the office.
7. Ask for written materials about your diagnosis, medication or condition.
8. If you are referred for testing, clarify what test are being performed and why?
9. Ask if your physician will contact you when your results are available and advise you of what your follow up should be.
10. Keep your scheduled follow up appointments. If you need to cancel, give the office as much notice as possible, and be sure to reschedule.

