

**Patient Notes:**

I am most concerned about:

• Symptoms: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

• Pain: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

• Medications: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

• Tests and Treatments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

• Other Concerns: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

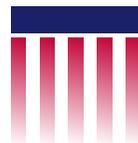
*After Your Visit: Review and make sure you understand all instructions. Take your medications as prescribed. Follow other advice such as diet or exercise instructions.*

*Between Visits: Even if you have long periods between clinic visits, you can still prepare for your next visit. Follow these tips: Write down questions about symptoms, pains, or other health concerns. Write down things you think are not normal for you, such as loss of appetite, light-headedness, dry mouth, and others. Call the Medical Advice Line if you have questions or concerns about your health.*

**For more information please call:**  
Washington DC VA Medical Center  
202-745-8247

Martinsburg VA Medical Center  
1-800-817-3807

VA Maryland Health Care System  
1-800-865-2441



Health Care Provider  
December, 2000



# Your Guide to Talking to Your Health Care Providers



## Veteran's Health Information

Patient Education Series



VA Capitol Health Care Network

VISN 5

FIVE STAR SERVICE FOR THOSE WHO SERVED

## Getting the Most Out of Your Visit to Your Doctor or Health Care Provider

The VA Medical Center wants you to have the best health care that staff can provide. One way is to make sure you get the most out of the time reserved for your clinic visit. To do this, we ask you to prepare and plan for your visit. If you plan your visit well there is a good chance all your health concerns for that time will be taken care of. Ask questions. Listen well. Understand what is being said. Be an active partner with your provider to ensure that you receive health care that is best for you.

### During your visit

- Ask questions. Be active and don't be shy. Show your checklist.
- Describe the worst symptoms first. Because time is limited, make sure your most important concern is taken care of. Schedule another visit if you need more time.

- Discuss your health problem and/or treatment. Ask about your treatment plan and your choices for treatment.
- Tell your doctor or provider what medicines you are taking. If you have side effects, tell your provider about them. Always ask for the purpose, side effects, and how to take new medications.
- Answer questions directly and carefully. Listen well. If you do not understand or hear a question, ask the doctor to repeat it.
- Talk about your feelings. Express how you feel about your health, such as being upset, angry, afraid, or depressed.
- Write things down. This will help you understand, remember, or follow instructions later on.
- About Medications: Why do I need this medicine? Are there any side effects? How soon should my symptoms improve or go away? Are there any special instructions?
- About tests: What is the test for? Are there any risks or side effects? Do I need to do anything special before or after the test? How will and how soon will I know the results?

- About treatment or surgery: What are the benefits? What are the risks? How soon will it improve my condition? If surgery is needed, can it be done on an outpatient basis?

### Useful hints to make the most out of your clinic visit

Prepare for your visit. Write down your questions. List your symptoms: where you are hurting, how it feels, and how long have you had the symptoms. List or take all your medications with you including over the counter and herbal medicines. You may need to bring a friend or relative with you.

Patients Notes: Write down things that you plan to talk about during your visit in the space provided.

*"Plan ahead. Make the most of your clinic visit"*

