



What is a primary care DOCTOR?

- The role of the **PRIMARY CARE DOCTOR**:
 - The doctor who will handle your health maintenance visits.
 - They will refer you to specialists as needed and keep in touch with the other medical specialists and healthcare providers you need.



CHOOSING A DOCTOR YOU ARE COMFORTABLE WITH

- Finding a **PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN** who you feel comfortable talking to is the first step in ensuring good communication with your doctor.
- Decide what qualities you want in your doctor:
 - Do they speak your primary language?
 - Do you prefer seeing a man or a woman?
 - Do you prefer a group practice or an individual doctor?
 - Does it matter which hospital the doctor admits patients to?



MAKE A LIST OF QUALITIES THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU IN A PHYSICIAN.

Choosing a doctor you are comfortable with

- ***Identifying Possible Doctors***

- Ask friends, relatives, and health professionals for the names of doctors they have had good experiences with

MAKE SURE YOU ASK WHAT THEY LIKED ABOUT THE DOCTOR THEY ARE RECOMMENDING.

- ***Learn About the Doctors You Are Considering***

- Once you have narrowed your list to 2-3 doctors and call their offices
- Talk to office staff about...
 - Whether your insurance is accepted
 - Whether the physician you want to see speaks the language you need
 - Whether the physician you want to see is accepting new patients

CHOOSING A DOCTOR YOU ARE COMFORTABLE WITH

- **Schedule an appointment to meet and talk to the doctor you are considering.**
 - Please keep in mind that you will likely be charged for this visit.
- **Questions you may want to ask a doctor about their practice:**
 - Do you have many **OLDER PATIENTS**?
 - How do you feel about **INVOLVING MY FAMILY** in care decisions?
 - Can I **CALL OR EMAIL** you or your staff when I have questions? Do you charge for telephone or email time?
 - What are your thoughts about **COMPLIMENTARY OR ALTERNATIVE TREATMENTS**?



Choosing a doctor you are comfortable with



- ***When making a decision about which doctor to choose, ask yourself:***
 - Did the doctor give me a **CHANCE TO ASK QUESTIONS**?
 - Was the doctor really **LISTENING** to me?
 - Could I **UNDERSTAND** what the doctor was saying? Was I **COMFORTABLE** asking him or her to say it again?

you need time!

- Development of any good relationship **REQUIRES TIME**.
- Your doctor really has **ONLY 8 MINUTES** to spend with you
- For routine appointments, this might be enough time.
- **HOWEVER**, if you have a new symptom or a major concern (for example, symptoms that have not improved),
 - **GIVE YOUR DOCTOR FAIR WARNING**
- **HOW DO YOU DO THAT?**
 - **LET THE SCHEDULER KNOW WHEN YOU MAKE THE APPOINTMENT!**



Prepare for your appointment

- When you make your appointment, **ASK IF YOU NEED TO DO ANYTHING TO PREPARE** for your appointment
 - Do I need to FAST?
 - Fasting means 12 hours with no food or drink except water and medications prior to your appointment.
 - Do I need to skip medication doses?
 - It is important to ask, but in general **TAKE YOUR MEDICATIONS AS DIRECTED**
- If the doctor you selected does not speak your language, make sure you ask your doctor's office to provide you with an **INTERPRETER** when you make your appointment.

Prepare for your appointment

- **MAKE A LIST OF WHAT YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.**
 - Do you have a new symptom you want to ask the doctor about?
 - Do you want to get a flu shot?
 - Are you concerned about how a treatment is affecting your daily life?
- If you have more than 3 items to discuss...
 - **ASK ABOUT THE MOST IMPORTANT ONES FIRST.**

TAKE THE LIST OF CONCERNS AND QUESTIONS WITH YOU TO YOUR APPOINTMENT



Prepare for your appointment

■ If you do not already have one, **COMPILE A LIST OF YOUR MEDICATIONS**.

■ Your list of medications should include:

- **Medication Name**
- **Dosage (How much you take each time)**
- **How many times per day you take the medication**
- **Name of the doctor who prescribed it to you and their specialty**
- **The condition you take the medication for**



Make sure you include any over-the-counter medications and herbal remedies!

Also provide a list of drug allergies!

Medication	Dosage	Frequency	Diagnosis	Prescribed By
Hydrochlorothiazide	25mg	1x per day	High Blood Pressure	T.Yamada (Primary Care)
Simvastatin	20mg	1x per day	High Cholesterol	M. Honda (Cardiology)
Aspirin	81mg	1x per day	Heart Attack Prevention	M. Honda (Cardiology)
Citalopram	20mg	1x per day	Depression	K. Kubota (Psychiatry)

Prepare for your appointment

- **PLAN TO UPDATE THE DOCTOR**

- Let the doctor know what has happened in your life since your last visit.
 - Have you been to the emergency room?
 - Have you had to be admitted into the hospital?
 - Have you seen a specialist?
 - Have there been any changes in mood, appetite, sleep or weight?
 - Have there been any changes in your medications?



CONSIDER TAKING A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND WITH YOU TO THE DOCTOR

- **TAKING A TRUSTED FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND WITH YOU TO DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENTS CAN BE HELPFUL**
 - They can help keep your story complete, ask questions for you, and listen on your behalf.
 - Let your family member or friend know in advance what you want out of your visit so that they can...
 - **REMIND YOU** of what you planned to discuss with the doctor
 - Take notes for you and **HELP YOU REMEMBER** what the doctor said
 - Give your companion advanced warning if you would like them to step out during the physical exam
 - If your doctor starts to explain something while your companion is out of the room, feel free to ask them to bring your companion back into the room for discussion.

GIVING INFORMATION TO YOUR DOC

- **TALKING ABOUT YOUR HEALTH MEANS SHARING INFORMATION ABOUT HOW YOU FEEL PHYSICALLY, MENTALLY, AND EMOTIONALLY**
 - Knowing how to describe your symptoms and bring up concerns will help you become a partner in your health care.
- **SHARE ANY SYMPTOMS**
 - Your report of symptoms tell the doctor a lot about what is going on in your body.
 - **Be honest** about what you are experiencing– it is not complaining.
 - **Be clear and concise** when describing your symptoms.

Giving information to your doc

- Questions to ask yourself about your symptoms:
 - **WHAT** exactly are my symptoms?
 - **WHEN** did they start?
 - Are the symptoms **CONSTANT**? If not, **WHEN** do I experience them?
 - **HOW LONG** do they last?
 - What makes it **BETTER OR WORSE**?
 - Do the symptoms **AFFECT MY DAILY ACTIVITIES**? Which ones? How?

Giving information to your doc

- **TELL THE DOCTOR ABOUT YOUR HABITS**

- **BE HONEST** about...

- Where you live
- What you eat
- What activities you enjoy
- If you smoke or drink.

- Being open and honest will help your doctor understand your medical problems full and recommend appropriate treatment for you.

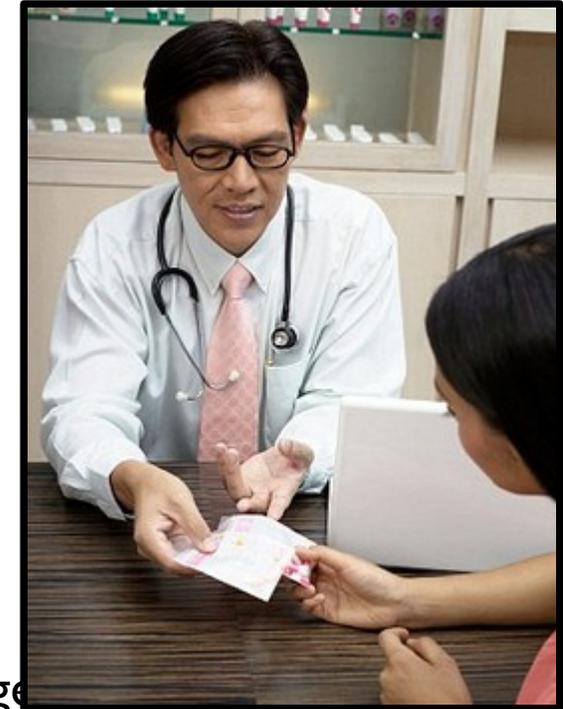
- **YOUR DOCTOR MAY ASK YOU ABOUT HOW YOUR LIFE IS GOING.**

- Tell the doctor about any **MAJOR LIFE CHANGES OR STRESSES** in your life.
- You don't need to go into detail, but this provides doctors with information that may be medically useful.



Getting information from your doc

- **ASK QUESTIONS** about
 - Words you don't understand
 - Instructions that aren't clear
- **LEARN ABOUT MEDICAL TESTS**
 - Questions to ask about medical tests:
 - **WHY** is the test being done?
 - **WHAT** does the test involve? How should I get ready?
 - Are there any **DANGERS OR SIDE EFFECTS** to the test?
 - **HOW** will I find out the results? **HOW LONG** does it take to get results?
 - **WHAT WILL WE KNOW** after the test?



Getting information from your doc

- **DISCUSS YOUR DIAGNOSIS & WHAT TO EXPECT**
 - If you understand your medical condition, you can help make better decisions about treatment.
 - Questions to ask about your diagnosis:
 - What may have **CAUSED** this condition? Will it **GO AWAY**?
 - How is the condition **TREATED** or **MANAGED**?
 - What are the **LONG-TERM EFFECTS** on my life?
 - How can I **LEARN MORE** about my condition?



More on medications

■ **LEARN ABOUT YOUR MEDICATIONS**

- Questions to ask about our medications:
 - What are the **COMMON SIDE EFFECTS**?
 - What should I do if I **MISS A DOSE**?
 - Should I take them **AT MEALS** or **BETWEEN MEALS**?
 - Are there any **FOODS, DRUGS, OR ACTIVITIES** I should **AVOID** while taking this medicine?
 - Will I need a **REFILL**? **HOW** do I arrange that?

■ **TELL YOUR DOCTOR IF...**

- The medicine does not seem to be working
- The medicine is causing new problems



It is best not to stop taking medications on your own.

Be sure to check with your doctor if you want to stop a medication.

MAKING DECISIONS WITH YOUR DOC



- **TALK ABOUT YOUR OPTIONS**

- Ask about your **CHOICES**

- There are many different ways to manage any health conditions.

- Discuss the **RISKS AND BENEFITS** for each option

- **MAKE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND** what your treatment involves and what it will do

MAKE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT IS BEING SAID AND DONE

- **ASK QUESTIONS** if you do not understand
- To make sure you understood things correctly,
 - **TELL THE DOCTOR WHAT YOU HEARD TO CLARIFY INFORMATION BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE ROOM**
- Don't be afraid or embarrassed about asking for clarification or for a simpler explanation
 - **UNDERSTANDING YOUR TREATMENT PLAN IS IMPORTANT FOR YOUR HEALTH**



IN SUMMARY



- 1. CHOOSE A DOCTOR WHO MAKES YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE AND HEARD**
- 2. WHEN MAKING YOUR APPOINTMENT, MAKE SURE YOU WARN THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE IF YOU THINK YOU NEED MORE TIME.**
- 3. PREPARE FOR YOUR APPOINTMENTS**
 - Have a list of your questions or concerns.
 - Have an updated list of your medications.
 - Think about how you would describe your symptoms.
- 4. ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE TESTS BEING DONE, YOUR DIAGNOSIS, AND YOUR TREATMENT PLAN (INCLUDING MEDICATIONS).**

THANK YOU!

