

In Good Health

Your Monthly Wellness Spotlight by PSA

MY DOCTOR WON'T LISTEN TO ME... HOW TO PROMOTE BETTER COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR DOCTOR

Good health care starts with good communication practices, but communication between you and your doctor can sometimes be difficult. At times, we tend to not share everything with our doctors including if we are unhappy with our visits.

It is important to know that you have the right to receive the best care possible. Just like any relationship, there are some that you simply do not get along with. You may come across a doctor that you just do not feel great about because you feel like they are not listening to you. Here are some tips to promote better communication with your doctor:

- Let him/her know how you are feeling – When your doctor says, “how are you doing”, be honest! Keeping a journal with how you are feeling each day can help you answer this question. If your doctor does not know how you are feeling, he or she cannot help you.
- Set clear goals for communication – This goes for office visits and communication when you are not feeling well or have a question. Make sure you identify what the plan is that works best for you and your doctor.
- Ask Questions - There are no right or wrong questions. If you have a question, it needs to be answered. If your doctor does not answer, continue to be persistent and maybe ask, “If you are unable to answer this question, do you know someone that can?”.

When you and your doctor work together as a team, you will get the best care possible. Your doctor should treat you with respect, listen to your concerns, encourage you to ask questions, and explain things in a way you understand.

Tips to Help You Search for a New Doctor

It is OK to change doctors and you should if you are not comfortable with the care you are receiving. It is YOUR treatment plan and every bit of it you should be comfortable with! Here are some tips to help you search for a new doctor:

- Make sure the doctor you choose is In-Network: This is probably the most important part in the search for a new doctor. By staying in-network, you will maximize

your benefits under your health plan. For primary care physicians, there are 3 types: Family Practice, Internal Medicine and General Practice.

- Talk to your Friends: Many of us will feel more comfortable if we know one of those close to us is happy with their doctor
- Location, Location, Location: Where do you want to see this doctor, close to home or close to work?
- Office Hours: Make sure the doctor's hours match when you will be able to see him/her.
- Does Language Matter? If it does, you want to make sure you find a doctor that you are comfortable speaking with.
- Key Questions to Ask:
 - Is the doctor taking new patients?
 - Is the doctor part of a group practice?
 - Will there be other doctors that will also provide care?
 - Who will see me if my doctor isn't available?
 - Does the doctor have experience with treatment conditions such as mine?
 - How long will it take to get an appointment?

Get to Know Your Options

Once you've narrowed down a list of several doctors, make an appointment to get to know them, then think about your experience after the first visit. Ask yourself, did the doctor and his/her staff:

- Make you feel comfortable?
- Explain things in a way you could understand?
- Listen to you?
- Show respect?
- Spend enough time with you?
- Give you a chance to ask questions?

If the answer to any of these questions is no, it is probably a good idea to keep looking.

You matter and so does the health care you receive. Speak up and demand the best care possible and do not be afraid to change doctors. Trust your gut!