TALKING WITH YOUR DOCTOR

Research has shown that when doctors and patients share in decision making, patients are more likely to follow the doctor's recommendations and patient health improves substantially. The following practical suggestions will help to ensure that the communication between you and your doctor is clear, understandable and effective.

Prepare for Your Doctor Visit
- Write out your symptoms, family history, questions and what you want from the doctor.
- Get your records from previous doctors.
- Take a pad and pencil with you to write down answers to your questions and instructions your doctor gives you (or tape record what the doctor says).

Take a Spouse, Relative, or Friend With You
- A spouse or friend can be supportive and help you relax.
- A companion can bring up concerns or questions that you may have forgotten or not considered.
- Later, he or she can help you recall the details of the visit and what the doctor said.

Tell the Doctor Everything About Your Health and Illness
- The more information you provide, the better your doctor can diagnose and treat your condition.
- Describe your symptoms completely; parts of the body involved, quality and severity of symptoms, time frame, what makes symptoms worse or better.
- Share information about your lifestyle and how you feel both physically and emotionally.
- Tell the doctor when a treatment or medication isn't working.
- Bring a list of all medications that you are currently taking, both prescription and non-prescription.

Ask Precise Questions
- What is my diagnosis? Can you explain it to me in detail?
- Is my condition chronic or acute? Is it likely to get worse?
- What is the recommended treatment? What are the benefits and risks of the treatment?
- What is the success rate for the treatment? Are there any alternatives?
- Will I need medication? If so, how will it help my condition and are there side effects?
- How much will this (visit, test, treatment) cost and will my insurance company cover it?
- How long will this treatment take? Can I stop the treatment if I'm feeling better?
- What activities, if any, should I avoid?
- Should I watch for anything special? Do I need a follow-up visit?
- Do you have any literature about my condition?

Be an Informed Medical Consumer
- Understand how your health plan works, what your rights are, and how to file a complaint, if necessary.
  The UNO medical plan can be viewed at www.nebraska.edu/docs/benefits/med_booklet.pdf

Take Charge
- Tell your doctor what you like and dislike about your choices for care.
- Ask questions about your treatment and how to obtain more detailed information about your diagnosis.
- Request your medical records if you wish to review the information your doctor has written about your condition and treatment.
- Consider a second opinion if you have any concerns about your physician's diagnosis and treatment recommendations.

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