

Managing Medical Appointments: A Caregiver's Tip Sheet

Learn what to do before, during and after key medical appointments for the person you're caring for.

If you're providing care to a family member or friend with an ongoing medical condition, you probably go to a lot of doctor's appointments with them. And you probably interact with people on their medical care team on a regular basis. To help stay organized — and make sure your family member or friend gets the best possible care — follow these practical tips.

Before the Appointment

- If you're one of several caregivers, make sure everyone is aware of the upcoming appointment. Remind the person you're caring for of the appointment at least a week in advance.
- Ask the person under your care if they have specific concerns or questions. Write these down to bring with you.
- When making the appointment, it can be helpful to ask what will be involved (i.e. will there be blood drawn?) and get a general timeframe. The more information you have going in, the more you can make necessary preparations and avoid situations that will cause your friend or family member to become nervous or alarmed.
- Avoid unexpected costs by calling the insurance company of the person under your care. Tell them the upcoming appointment and any others you have scheduled. Get a sense of what out-of-pocket expenses will be.
- Will you be needing a wheelchair? Any other accommodations? Call ahead to make sure things are in place when you arrive.
- Get all paperwork organized, which at a minimum will include a current insurance card.



At the Appointment

- The National Institute on Aging (NIA) suggests that caregivers allow the person under their care to answer a doctor's questions — unless the doctor specifically addresses the question to you. The NIA also encourages caregivers to always include the person they're caring for in discussions with the doctor. Avoid talking about them as if they're not in the room.
- Bring an up-to-date list of all medications and supplements.
- Take notes whenever a medical professional is sharing information with the person in your care. If you don't understand something or you can tell there's confusion, ask the doctor to explain things in a different way.
- Go through the list of questions and concerns that you prepared beforehand with the doctor. Even better, bring along two copies so that the doctor can refer to one as you work your way down the list.
- Respect the privacy of the person you're caring for by leaving the room when necessary.

After the Appointment

Fill prescriptions and get recommended medical equipment right away. (These are great tasks for someone to do who has been asking how they can help you.)

Schedule follow-up appointments as needed.

On the drive home, ask your friend or family member about the appointment and the doctor's suggestions. Doctor's visits can be stressful, so be a good listener and let them express their feelings.

Sources:

National Institute on Aging: Doctor's appointments: Tips for caregivers

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/doctors-appointments-tips-caregivers>

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