

# THE SECRET TO A SUCCESSFUL MEDICAL VISIT

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A visit to your doctor, whether it is routine, (as in the case in your annual medical), or for a problem you wish to have remedied, will not achieve its desired goal, (the improvement of your health status), if certain criteria are not met. Even if your visit results from a health emergency almost all of the same basic rules apply.

### BE PREPARED

The most important aspect of your visit will be the information which you give. This information is called the **History**. You will tell the doctor **what** is happening, but he or she will want to know **when** it started and the **sequence of events** since the problem began. You should try to put this information together **before** seeing the physician as this will help your visit to go more smoothly. Even in the case of an emergency where this history may be much shorter (i.e.: a few hours) this information is critical so that the correct diagnosis can be made.

### KNOW YOUR PAST MEDICAL HISTORY

Illness which you have had in the past may have a very important bearing on your present condition. You should know the years in which past illnesses or hospitalizations occurred. Past operations are also important as are past accidents and past broken bones. The type of treatment which you received is also vital information.

### KNOW YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

As Medicine progresses we are now aware that many illnesses have a genetic basis, this means, the possibility exists that other members of the family may have the same problem.

You must enquire about illnesses on **both sides of your family**, maternal and paternal and write them down in what we will call your **little health book**. Get health information about your mother and father, grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins.

### BE HONEST IN YOUR SOCIAL AND SEXUAL HISTORY

The doctor will usually enquire about your **social habits** such as the amount of **alcohol** you drink and the number of **cigarettes or other material** which you smoke. As we are all aware drinking and smoking may have very negative effects on the body so the doctor must have a true concept of what is taking place in order to guide you in the correct way. In the case of some conditions it may be necessary to take a very **detailed sexual history** in order to make the correct diagnosis. The medical profession is bound by strict rules of **confidentiality** so patients should not fear revealing sensitive details to their physician.

## FOR LADIES ONLY

We ladies are unique. We have health issues specific to us, as we have menstrual periods, get pregnant and have babies. It is amazing however that many of us can give little information about this critical aspect of our lives.

**MENARCHE:** We should know the approximate age at which we began to menstruate.

**PARITY:** The doctor will want to know how many times you have been pregnant. The number of live children you have. How many children you have lost, at what stage in the pregnancy they were lost, and the reason for their loss.

**LAST MENSTRUAL PERIOD:** You should know the **date of your last menstrual period**. A doctor needs to know whether you may be pregnant as there are many **medications** which should not be given to a pregnant woman as they may **harm the baby**. This information is also vital in our decision making with respect to an **ectopic pregnancy**. An ectopic pregnancy is what people refer to as a “baby in the wrong tube”. An ectopic pregnancy can lead to death.

**REGULARITY OF OUR PERIODS:** The **regularity** of your periods gives the doctor an idea of what the hormones which control the periods are doing. Some ladies may see their periods more than once for the month as their cycles are shorter than 28 days. If you **miss** a period, have changes in the **length of time between periods**, have changes in the **amount of bleeding** which you normally have, note **changes in the amount of pain** you experience you should check with your Gynaecologist.

**PLANNING A PREGNANCY:** A pregnancy should be planned. There are **tests** which your doctor should do **before you get pregnant** so that problems which are discovered can be sorted out. There are **medications** which are given before pregnancy occurs to facilitate save development of baby’s brain. Most important of all is the fact that you should visit your Obstetrician and Gynaecologist **with your partner**, before getting pregnant so that he too can be checked and any problems can also be dealt with. Remember that a few genetic and blood problems can also be checked for before pregnancy occurs.

## KNOW YOUR MEDICATION AND TAKE THEM WITH YOU

In this 21<sup>st</sup> Century we have at our disposal a mind boggling array of medication. We can buy them over the counter, we can order them from the internet, we can get them from our health food store and more recently I have noted that some are available at restaurants and bars. Our parents and grandparents prepare a wide array of teas “coolings”, purges, locks, poultices and rubbings to treat our various ailments. We can now regularly cleanse our colons and detoxify. We who practice standard medicine as opposed to herbal medicine, while not wishing to decry any particularly mode of treatment wish to make it clear to our patients, that **anything which we put in our bodies or apply to our bodies may have side effects**.

If we think about this logically: Some of us are allergic to seafood, some to mangoes, some to pineapples, these are all very natural things which can cause serious and even life-threatening side effects.

When we see our doctor we must inform them of **every single thing we are taking and using** whether it is something we are **rubbing** on, **drinking** or **inserting** somewhere in the body. Our Vitamins our tonics our **“coolings”** our **purges** our **herbal medications**, as well as **our medications prescribed by any other doctor whom we have seen.**

You must know all of their **NAMES** and the **DOSAGE** which you are taking. Many pills **LOOK ALIKE** and many drug names **SOUND ALIKE**. If you cannot remember them, **bring them along** for your doctor so we can make a note of them and research them if necessary.

Many people do not recognize the danger **of taking a mixture of different things together**. This applies to both herbal and doctor prescribed medications. **Mixing of the different types of herbals, vitamins, “coolings”, purges etc: with your doctor’s medication may result in liver damage, kidney damage, heart damage and even death. Mixing medications from two different doctors whom we may be seeing at the same time may also cause serious problems.** Let the doctor know that you are or have seeing someone else and what you have been given.

## **ALLERGIES**

We must remember to **tell the doctor about our allergies**. Medications may not sound like the one you know you are allergic to but they may be related to each other and may cause the same side effects.

Having gone through the list above you now can see that your visit to the doctor is a very important time when you will give the doctor all the detailed information which he or she may need to give you the proper diagnosis and treatment which you deserve.