



Your Doctor

**Your doctor may be
a man or a woman.**



Female doctor



Male doctor

**Your nurse may be
a man or woman.**



Female nurse



Male nurse

What Happens At the Doctor's Office?

People see doctors when they are sick. They also see doctors when they are well for **checkups** to help them stay healthy.

When you go to a doctor's office, first you tell the person at the front desk your name. You may need to fill out some forms. You will wait until the nurse calls you. Then you will see the doctor.

Going to the doctor can be scary, especially if you do not know what to expect. Sometimes it is hard to describe your **symptoms**. Sometimes it may be hard to understand what the doctor is telling you.



**This chapter will answer
these questions.**

- What happens at the doctor's office?
- What can I do before I see the doctor?
- What questions do I ask the doctor?
- How do I describe my symptoms?
- How do I fill out a health history form?

When you go to the doctor's office, you will:

- Sign in. This means you tell the person at the front desk your name and why you are there.
- Fill out some forms. You may need to fill out a **health history form**.
- Wait in the waiting room until the nurse calls you.
- Go with the nurse to an **examining room**. The nurse will weigh you, measure your height, and take your blood pressure.
- The nurse may ask you to undress and wear a **gown** that will allow the doctor to examine you more easily. The nurse will leave the room while you change into the gown.
- Wait in the examining room until the doctor knocks on the door and comes in.
- Tell the doctor why you are there. You will need to describe your symptoms. The doctor will then examine you.
- Talk with your doctor about why you are there.

Before you see the Doctor, you will:



1. Sign in



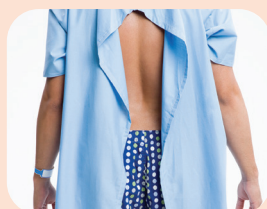
2. Fill out forms



3. Wait for someone to call your name



4. Get weighed and measured



5. Put on the examining gown

Before you go to the Doctor

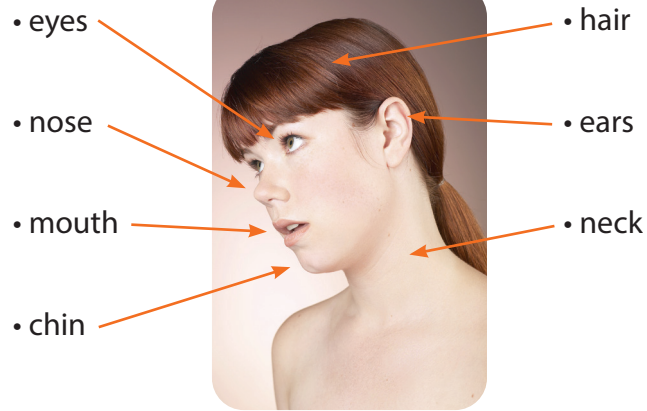
Here are some things you can do before you go to the doctor's office to help you and your doctor understand each other better:

- Write down the **medicines** you take or bring your medicines with you (prescription medicines AND over-the-counter medicines).
- Write down all the health problems you have ever had, and the symptoms you are feeling now.
- Practice describing your symptoms in English. Practice with a friend or family member.
- If you have a **picture dictionary** or **bilingual phrase book**, take it with you. If the doctor does not understand you, point to what you are trying to say.
- Ask a friend to go with you to help you understand what to do and say.
- Call the doctor's office and ask for a **medical interpreter** to help you and your doctor communicate.

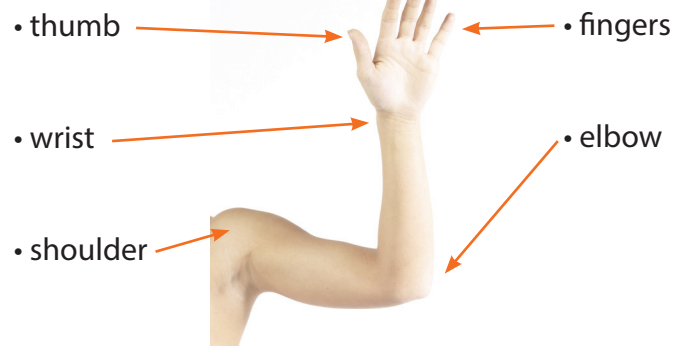
Learn These Words

Knowing these words about the body will help you describe your symptoms.

Head



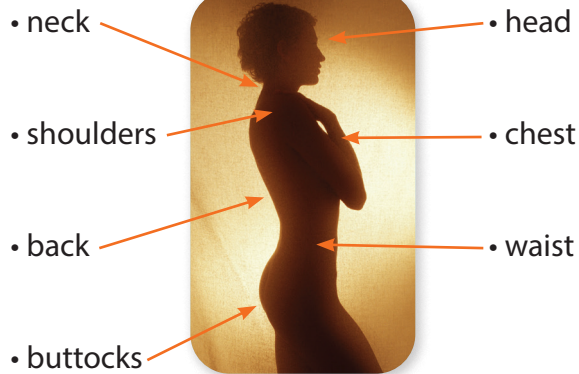
Hands and Arms



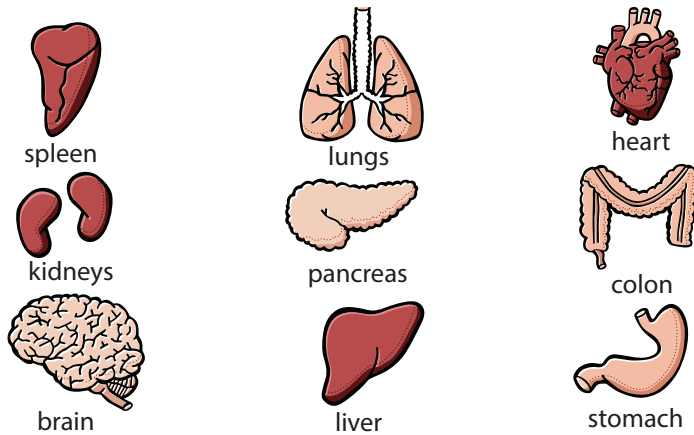
Legs and Feet



External Body Areas



Internal Body Parts



Common Feelings

- fine, great
- good
- OK
- so-so
- not so good
- sick
- in pain







How Do I Describe My Symptoms?

Use these charts to practice describing your symptoms in English before you go to the doctor.








Common Symptoms Chart I

| Symptom | What it means |
|---------------------|---|
| Gas, fart | Bad-smelling air comes from the bowels. |
| Numbness | You cannot feel. |
| Tingling | You feel prickling in your body or your skin. |
| Seizure | A sudden, short attack of shaking and you become unconscious. |
| Shortness of breath | You cannot get enough air. It is hard to breathe. |
| Wheezing | You make a whistling sound when you breathe. |

Common Symptoms Chart II

| Picture | Symptom | What it means |
|---|--------------|---|
|  | Congestion | Your nose is full, it's hard to breathe. |
|  | Constipation | Your stool is too hard and does not come out. |
|  | Cough | A quick, noisy push of air from your throat or lungs. |
|  | Diarrhea | Your stool is watery. |

Common Symptoms Chart II (continued)

| Picture | Symptom | What it means |
|---|--------------|---|
|  | Dizziness | You feel faint, lightheaded, shaky or wobbly. |
|  | Fatigue | You feel tired all the time. |
|  | Fever | Your body is too hot, your temperature is too high. |
|  | Headache | Pain or ache in your head. |
|  | Itching | You want to rub or scratch. |
|  | Nausea | You feel like you need to throw up. |
|  | Pain | You feel an ache, hurt, stinging, or soreness. |
|  | Rash | You have red marks, bumps, or spots on your skin. |
|  | Sneeze | A quick push of air out of your nose and mouth. |
|  | Sore throat | Your throat hurts, it's hard to swallow. |
|  | Stomach ache | Pain or ache in your stomach. |
|  | Vomit | To be sick, to throw up from your stomach. |

What Did the Doctor Say?

It is easier to understand your doctor if you know the words and phrases doctors use. This chart shows some common words and phrases doctors use, and ways you can answer.

| Common Words and Phrases Doctors Use | | |
|--|--|---|
| When the doctor says: | The doctor means: | Some ways you can answer: |
| Do you have a family history of cancer? | Have your parents, grandparents, brothers, or sisters ever had cancer? | No. I don't know. Yes, my mother had breast cancer. |
| Have you experienced any bad headaches? | Have you had bad headaches? Have you felt bad headaches? | No. Yes. Yes, sometimes. Yes, a lot (often). Yes, all the time. |
| Have you ever had a reaction to this medicine? | Did it make you sick? Did it make you feel different? | No. Yes. Yes, it made me dizzy. Yes, it gave me a rash. |
| I want you to schedule a follow-up . | I want to see you again. Please make another appointment . | OK. When do you want to see me again? |
| I'm going to write you a script. | I'm going to give you a prescription for some medicine. | OK. How much do I take and how often? |
| I'm going to give you a referral . | I want you to see a special doctor. I'll give you her name and phone number. | Thank you. I will call to make an appointment right away. |

What Questions Should I Ask the Doctor?

You have a **right** and **responsibility** to ask your doctor questions. This means you can and you should ask questions.



Ask these 3 questions each time you see the doctor:

1. What is my main problem?
2. What do I need to do?
3. Why is it important for me to do this?

It is your doctor's job to explain clearly the answers to these questions. It is your job to be sure you understand the answers before you leave the doctor's office.

What Do I Say If I Don't Understand?

1. Excuse me. Please repeat.
2. Please say that again.
3. Please tell me one more time.
4. What does that mean?
5. Explain it more, please.
6. Please show me a picture.
7. Please show me that word in my dictionary.
8. Please write down what you are saying.

What is a Health History Form?

A **health history form** is also sometimes called a **medical history form**. A health history form will ask you to describe the following.

- Your health habits.
- Health problems you have now or had in the past.
- Times that you were in the hospital and why.
- Any operations (surgery) you have had.
- Illnesses or diseases family members have or had.
- What medicines you take.



Filling Out a Health History Form

It is very important to fill out the medical history form correctly. Your doctor can help you much better if he or she knows your true health history.

- DO NOT just circle “No” if you do not understand something.
- If you don’t understand, ASK for help.
- Get to the **appointment** early so you have time to fill it out.

| NAME: _____ | | DATE: _____ | |
|--|--------------|---|--|
| MEDICAL HISTORY | | | |
| Please Circle Appropriate Response: | | | |
| NO | YES | Are you in good general health? | |
| NO | YES | Are you now taking any drugs or medications? | |
| Which ones? | | | |
| NO | YES | Are you allergic to any medications? | |
| Which ones? | | | |
| Family Doctor: | | | |
| Phone: | | | |
| NO | YES | Would you object to our office contacting your family doctor in regard to any medical problem that may arise? | |
| NO | YES | Have you ever received <u>local</u> anesthesia (Novocaine or Xylocaine) by a dentist or doctor? | |
| NO | YES | Have you ever received <u>general</u> anesthesia? | |
| NO | YES | Have you ever had any adverse reaction to either local or general anesthesia? | |
| Please describe: | | | |
| NO | YES | Do you take blood thinners? | |
| Which ones? | | | |
| NO | YES | Do you take vitamins regularly? | |
| Which ones? | | | |
| NO | YES | Do you take vitamins containing Vitamin E? | |
| NO | YES | Do you take aspirin products or anti-inflammatory medicines or headache medicines? | |
| Which ones? | | | |
| NO | YES | Do you exercise regularly? | |
| PLEASE LIST ALL PREVIOUS SURGERIES AND DATES: | | | |
| DO ANY FAMILY MEMBERS HAVE: (Circle if yes) | | | |
| Heart trouble | Tuberculosis | Excessive bleeding tendency | |
| HAVE YOU HAD: | | | |
| NO | YES | Blood pressure or related problems | |
| NO | YES | Liver, gallbladder, problems | |
| NO | YES | "yellow jaundice", Hepatitis problems | |
| NO | YES | Heart trouble | |
| NO | YES | Kidney disease | |
| NO | YES | Diabetes | |
| NO | YES | Stomach problems, indigestion or ulcers | |
| NO | YES | Bleeding tendency or excessive bruising | |
| NO | YES | Any part of your body paralyzed or numb | |
| NO | YES | Psychiatric consultation | |
| NO | YES | Epilepsy-convulsions or seizures | |
| NO | YES | Broken bones of the face, neck, jaw or back | |
| NO | YES | Back trouble | |
| NO | YES | Abnormal chest x-rays | |
| NO | YES | Abnormal Electrocardiogram (ECG) | |
| NO | YES | Asthma or other respiratory problems | |
| NO | YES | Any medical treatment for nervous condition | |
| NO | YES | Excessive scarring | |
| NO | YES | Tuberculosis | |
| NO | YES | Thyroid problems | |
| NO | YES | Any other illnesses. If so please list: | |
| NO | YES | A gain or loss of more than 15 pounds in your body weight. | |
| NO | YES | Abdominal or inguinal hernia | |
| NO | YES | History of blood clots in legs or lungs | |
| NO | YES | History of legs swelling | |
| NO | YES | Glaucoma, cataracts | |
| NO | YES | Dry eyes | |
| NO | YES | Herpes or Cold Sores | |
| DO YOU: | | | |
| NO | YES | Wear contact lenses | |
| NO | YES | Have dentures, false teeth, caps or bridges | |
| NO | YES | Smoke? How much? | |
| NO | YES | Drink alcohol? How much? | |
| NO | YES | Think you are pregnant? Date of last menstrual period: | |
| NO | YES | Have any contagious or infectious condition | |

To help you fill out a health history form, make a chart like the one below before you go to the doctor so you have the information you need.

| My Health History Chart | | | | |
|-------------------------|--|--|--|-------------------------|
| Medicines I take | Health problems I have, or had before (include allergies to medications) | Family health history, health problems my family has had | Surgeries I have had, or times I have stayed in the hospital | Questions I want to ask |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Check Your Learning

What is a health history form?

- ☐ A form you fill out to apply for health insurance
- ☐ A form you fill out so you can ask your doctor questions
- ☐ A form you fill out to tell your doctor the health problems you and your family have or had



Key Points

- Ask your doctor questions.
- If you don't understand, ask for help!
- Know your health history.

How Can a Doctor Help?

- A doctor can help you stay healthy. Talk to your doctor about your health and how to stay healthy.
- A doctor can help you take care of health problems. Ask your doctor questions about your health problems.
- Your doctor can help you understand. If you don't understand something, ask your doctor to explain it again.

Dialog



Doctor: You have some mild hypertension. I'm going to write you a script for some medication.

Patient: Excuse me, but I don't understand. What is hypertension?

Doctor: Hypertension means high blood pressure. Your blood pressure is a little too high, so I want you to take some medicine.

Patient: Oh, Ok. And what is a script?

Doctor: A script is a short way of saying prescription.

Patient: Ok, thank you for explaining that.

Doctor: No problem. I'm glad you asked!

How Can I Learn More?

Visit these websites to learn more about talking with your doctor.

Information

Healthcare Basics

<https://youtu.be/0WKVyoZJSbA>

Ask Me 3

https://www.ihs.gov/sites/healthcommunications/themes/responsive2017/display_objects/documents/AskMe_8-pg_NatAmer.pdf

Talking to Your Doctor

<https://www.nih.gov/institutes-nih/nih-office-director/office-communications-public-liaison/clear-communication/talking-your-doctor>

Questions to Ask Your Doctor

<https://www.ahrq.gov/questions/10questions.html>

Activities

Reep Health Vocabulary Practice

<http://www.reepworld.org/englishpractice/health/index.htm>

Describing Symptoms to Your Doctor – ESOL Podcast

<https://secure3.eslpod.com/podcast/esl-podcast-227-describing-symptoms-to-a-doctor/>

Describing Pain and Symptoms - ESL Health Unit

http://www.udelas.ac.pa/site/assets/files/4301/health_lesson.pdf

Understanding Medical Words: A Tutorial

<https://medlineplus.gov/medwords/medicalwords.html>

Free or Low Cost Services

NeedyMeds

<https://www.needymeds.org/free-clinics-branch>

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