

## The Inside Story Q&A: Preparing for Your Doctor Visits

*One of the best ways to take control of your own care and well-being is to form an effective relationship with your doctor. Dr. Chuie Yuen, CIGNA Senior Medical Director, provides some important guidelines to help you prepare for doctor visits.*

### **What is the best way to prepare for a doctor's visit?**

When making your appointment, be clear about your concerns or issues that you want to discuss with your doctor. Be specific about what the appointment is for and give details about your symptoms. If you are scheduling a preventive exam, make sure that is clear. Providing the right details will allow the office to schedule enough time for your visit.

Bring the results of your health risk assessment to the appointment to discuss the findings with your doctor. The assessment can help you and your doctor focus on any health issues or areas of concern that need to be addressed. If you are preparing for a routine physical, check [CIGNA's Preventive Guidelines](#) and be sure to also schedule the necessary annual or periodic screenings.

It is also critical to make a list of questions and concerns, and specific symptoms before your visit.

### **What should I bring with me to my visit?**

Along with a list of questions for your doctor, bring all medications, vitamins and nutritional supplements you are currently taking. Bringing the actual medications allows your doctor to check the dosages as well as the types of medicine.

If you have medical records of any kind, bring them to the visit as well. Start being your own record keeper. Ask for copies of your hospital records, x-rays and test results whenever possible. Create your own personal health plan using this information.

### **What if a diagnostic test is recommended?**

It's a good idea to find out the exact purpose of the test. What will it show and how will the result impact treatment? What are the alternative options and costs for the test? Are there specific locations/labs preferred? Is this a one-time test, or will you have to repeat it at certain intervals—and what is that timing?

You'll want to know how you should prepare for any procedure, if your medications need to be monitored or adjusted, and what to expect after the procedure, such as how and when you will learn the results from your doctor.

### **What if I don't understand what the doctor has told me?**

Ask questions until you have complete clarity on all issues. Be specific about what you want to know. In the case of a diagnosis, you may want to know details such as:

- How long before I can (ski, travel, run, sky dive)?
- Will I be able to (run, walk, climb stairs, lift my children)?
- What are the treatment options, including medications, lifestyle and behavior changes?
- What happens if I don't get treatment or don't follow it consistently?

If you are diagnosed with a chronic condition, for example, you may want to review the health information on [myCIGNA.com](#), provided through WebMD, or go to external sites that are specific to your chronic condition, such as the American Diabetes Association and American Heart Association for additional information and resources.

Other good questions:

- How often should I see the doctor?
- How will it affect my life specifically?
- Where can I get more information about my condition?
- Are there support groups for my condition?