Making the Most of Visits with Your Doctor

It is a good idea to organize your information and questions before you see your doctor. Here are some tips that will help you make the most of your visit.

Organize Your Health Information

- Keep your health information in a notebook, folder or file. If you are seeing a new doctor, you should take your information with you to your appointment.
- Keep notes about your personal health history, including the dates, for the following:
  - Your past and present health problems
  - Any surgeries or procedures
  - Tests and the results, if known (ask for copies of your tests and lab reports for your records)
  - Any allergies
  - Vaccines that you have received
  - Your medicines
  - Health information about your parents, grandparents or siblings, if known

More on next page ➔
Preparing for Your Visit

- Write down any questions you have for your doctor.
  - Underline or highlight the questions that you want to make sure your
    doctor answers.

- Write down any symptoms or problems, especially any new symptoms
  you have had since your last visit. For example:
  - If you have headaches, tell the doctor when you get them, how long
    they last, if you get dizzy, what makes them better or worse, what
    you have done to treat the problem and if it has worked.
  - If you have pain, tell the doctor where is it located, how it feels
    (burning, cramping, aching, dull, stinging or sharp) and if it prevents
    you from doing your normal activities.

- Keep a list of all the medicines you are taking, including:
  - Medicines prescribed by any of your doctors
  - Herbs
  - Vitamins
  - Over-the-counter medicines

- Write down the following information about each medicine:
  - The name
  - How much you take
  - When you take it
  - Why you take it

- Be prepared to bring in all of your medicines (in the original containers)
  so your doctor can review them with you at your visit.

- **Ask a family member or friend to come with you to the visit. This
  person can listen and take notes while you are talking to the doctor.**
Things to Bring

- Insurance information
- Photo I.D., such as your driver’s license
- Your list of questions
- Your list of medicines

During Your Visit

- Share the list of questions or problems you want to talk about with your doctor.
- Tell the doctor how much you want to know about your condition, treatment and medicines. For more information:
  - Visit The Library for Health Information located in the Atrium on the 5th floor of Rhodes Hall. You may also contact the library by calling (614)-293-3707 or emailing health-info@osu.edu.
  - Go to the Patient Education website at http://go.osu.edu/patiented.
  - Go to The James Cancer Hospital website at cancer.osu.edu.
- Ask your doctor to explain anything you do not understand. It is important for you to know what your doctor has said, so you can take care of yourself.
- Make sure that you:
  - Ask for written instructions or make your own notes about how to care for yourself (such as changes in your diet or activity level, special treatments and any equipment or supplies you may need).
  - Understand the medicine you need to take, including how much you should take, the time of day you should take it and for how many days.
  - Ask about any side effects you should watch for and what you should do.
Things to Know

- People respond to treatments or medicines differently.
- It is important to let your health care team know if you have an Advance Directive, so they can honor your health care choices. If you would like to have an Advance Directive ask your doctor for more information.
- You have choices. You may get a second opinion. You may ask about changing your treatment plan. You can choose to have a different doctor.
- It is important to ask your doctor for a refill several days before your medicine will be gone.

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.