

# Dear Marci AFT and NYSUT

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## *How should I prepare for a doctor's appointment?*

Dear Marci,

I usually get very nervous before my doctor's visits. My doctors are wonderful, but medical appointments have always felt overwhelming to me, and I forget to ask the questions I wanted to ask. How should I prepare for appointments and make the most of my time with my doctors?

-Vinnie (Phoenix, AZ)

Dear Vinnie,

It's understandable to be nervous or overwhelmed at medical appointments. I think many people share your feelings! Communication is key in building good relationships with your doctors and getting the best possible care. I would recommend the following tips to make the most of your appointments and to feel your best.

**First, be prepared.** Leading up to your appointment, think about what you would like to tell and ask the doctor. Make a list of this information and these questions and bring it to your visit. Also consider whether you want to bring another person to your appointment, like a family member, friend, or caregiver. It's sometimes helpful to have another person with you, whether for emotional support or asking questions. It may calm your nerves to pack a bag before your visit to ensure you don't forget anything important. Pack your bag with all of your insurance cards (for example, Medicare, Medicaid, Medigap, and/or Medicare Advantage cards), any relevant documents or health history, your list of questions, and something for taking notes.

**Next, share information.** Tell your doctor about any current symptoms or concerns during your visit. If there are several, consider ranking them in order of how much they are affecting or troubling you. Tell your doctor if you are having trouble with activities of daily living, such as bathing or dressing. Also inform your doctor about other health care providers (like specialists or therapists) you have seen and any treatments they have prescribed or recommended. Health issues can be hard to talk about, but it is important that your doctor has as much relevant information from you as

possible so they can recommend the best possible care. If your doctor does not specifically ask for information that you think is important, tell them.

**Ask questions.** If you do not understand something your doctor says, ask them to explain it. Don't be afraid to ask the same question more than once, or to ask if your doctor can explain something in a different way, if you need more time to process an answer. If you need further clarification, consider scheduling a phone conversation or speaking to a nurse or other provider.

**Get it in writing.** Ask your doctor to write down what you should do between now and your next visit. This may include instructions for how to take medications, specialists you should see, and/or lifestyle modifications.

**And finally, follow up.** If you experience problems after your appointment, or if you have symptoms that get worse, call your doctor's office to schedule a follow-up appointment. You may also need to make a lab appointment or find out how to access test results. It could be helpful to learn if your doctor uses any form of electronic communication, like email or an online portal. These can help you communicate questions and look up previous appointments and lab/test results without having to call the doctor's office directly.

I hope these tips help you prepare for your next doctor's appointment and feel a little more confident. Best of luck!

-Marci



## Health Tip

The month of April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM). The [CDC](#) explains that sexual violence "is a serious public health problem in the United States that profoundly impacts lifelong health, opportunity, and well-being." The theme for SAAM 2023 is Drawing Connections: Prevention Demands Equity. Learn more at the [National Sexual Violence Resource Center](#).

### For NYSUT Members

## Upcoming Medicare Minute Presentation

Join the Medicare Rights Center's free monthly Medicare Minute presentations for NYSUT members. Each month's Medicare Minute will help you learn more about your benefits and make the most of your Medicare coverage.

Next Presentation

**Medigaps**

**Wednesday, May 17, 3-3:30pm**

During this Medicare Minute, you will learn the basics of Medigaps, how they compare to other coverage options, and when you can purchase one.

**Register here:**

[https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_m4Yh5LHFRnGHQ5YA3PJ0kw](https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_m4Yh5LHFRnGHQ5YA3PJ0kw)

**Join here:**

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84803201742>

Dial-in 646-558-8656

Webinar ID 84803201742#

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Dear Marci is a biweekly e-newsletter designed to keep you -- people with Medicare, social workers, health care providers and other professionals -- in the loop about health care benefits, rights and options for older Americans and people with disabilities.

The Medicare Rights Center is a national, nonprofit consumer service organization that works to ensure access to affordable health care for older adults and people with disabilities through counseling and advocacy, educational programs, and public policy initiatives.

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