



CHAPTER

2

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

- 
- eyes
 - nose
 - mouth
 - chin
 - hair
 - ears
 - neck

Hands and Arms

- 
- thumb
 - wrist
 - shoulder
 - fingers
 - elbow

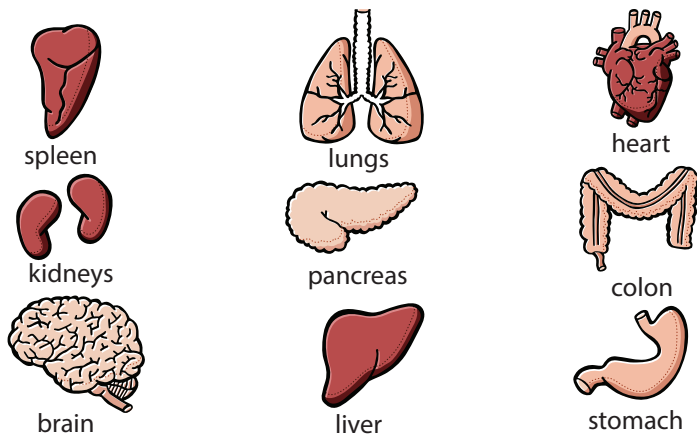
Legs and Feet

- 
- thigh
 - knee
 - foot
 - hip
 - ankle
 - toes

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.





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

<http://goo.gl/n1dFVc>

Questions to Ask Your Doctor

<https://www.ahrq.gov/patients-consumers/patient-involvement/ask-your-doctor/index.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/>

Visiting the Doctor: Lessons in Language and Culture

<http://literacynet.org/vtd>

Understanding Medical Words: A Tutorial

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

Free or Low Cost Services

NeedyMeds

http://www.needymeds.org/free_clinics.taf

NOTES

NOTES