



You and Your Child's Doctor

When it comes to your child, you are the expert. Talking with your child's doctor may be difficult for you. It takes time to develop trust and relationships. These tips may help you develop a good working relationship with your child's doctor.

Remember, you and the doctor are equal partners in your child's care.

- Be respectful of each others' knowledge. Share what you know about your child with the doctor. Also share suggestions or ideas about your child's needs.
- Be respectful of each others' time. Write down your questions, ideas and concerns ahead of time. If needed, make a special appointment to talk about your child's care. Don't be afraid to ask questions like the ones listed below.
- When telling the doctor about a problem, be as specific as possible. When does it happen, how often does it happen (every day, only once, etc.), what do you see, how does it affect your child's life? For example, "my child works harder to breathe every time she walks more than a few feet. This has really affected her ability to go to school and play outside with her friends."
- If necessary, find one doctor that can coordinate your child's medical care. This primary care doctor can also provide basic medical care for your child.

Think about what you need help with.

- What are the most important points that you want to tell the doctor?
- What are the most important questions you need answered?
- Be sure to write down questions that you might not ask because of embarrassment or guilt (see questions below).

It will be helpful to keep a record of tests and results, treatments and surgeries, hospitalizations, medicines and immunizations. Take this updated record with you to all appointments. For a free, downloadable record, see the Care Notebook at: <http://tinyurl.com/g3el9>. Select Forms from the **Category** drop down menu.

Helpful ideas

- List your questions in order of importance. There may not be time for all of them. If possible, mail or fax any new information and questions ahead of time. This way the doctor can be prepared.
- Make copies of any important pages from your record-keeping system to share with the doctor.
- Ask for permission to use a tape recorder. It can be hard to remember all that's been said and just as hard to take detailed notes.
- Ask who can help you find resources, organizations, support groups, and websites. Ask if there is a Family Resource Center in your hospital. They may be able to help you find resources.

Helpful ideas (continued)

- If you don't understand what's being said, ask them to explain again. "You know, I asked you this last time, and you gave me an answer. When I got home, I realized that I really didn't understand."
- Keep in mind that there won't always be an answer.
- Ask the doctor to send copies of any tests and reports of the visit to you, and other providers you think may benefit from the information. Have their addresses written down in your Care Notebook.

Questions you might want to ask

You do not have to ask these exact questions. You can pick questions that will be helpful for you, or come up with your own.

Diagnosis Questions

- What is it?
- How do you spell that?
- What does that mean?
- What will that mean for my child and family?
- Where can I find more details about the diagnosis?
- Are there any agencies that help families with a child who has this diagnosis?

Treatment Questions

- What are the recommended treatment choices? Are there other options?
- Which options are not recommended? Why?
- How soon must a decision be made?
- What might I gain or lose by taking a little more time to research and decide?
- What would happen if we chose to do nothing?

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to provide you with additional information about your child's care. Diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up should be provided by your health care professional.