

Going To The Doctor*

TIPS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES



Going to the doctor is important, because it gives you an opportunity to ask questions about your body and to stay healthy. This tip sheet will explain why people go to the doctor and what to expect before, during, and after a visit.

Common reasons for going to the doctor

- General checkup to stay healthy
- Feeling sick but do not know why
- To be treated for an illness, injury, or surgery
- To get a physical exam for school, camp, or work

Making an appointment with the doctor

- Before you call, know your doctor's name.
- Call the doctor's office to make an appointment.
- Tell the receptionist your doctor's name.
- Share the reason you want to see the doctor.
- The receptionist will suggest a date and time.
- If you can go in at that time, tell him or her it will be a good time and write down the date and time.
- If you cannot go at that time, ask for another appointment time or date.

Once the appointment is scheduled

- Make transportation arrangements for getting to the doctor.
- You may want to make a list of questions to ask the doctor.

Keeping the appointment

It is very important to keep your appointment. Some doctors may even charge you if you do not keep an appointment. If something comes up that makes it impossible for you to keep it, be sure to call the doctor's office as soon as you know to cancel the appointment and to get a new time and date.

The day of the appointment

Try to get to the doctor's appointment about 15 minutes early. Be sure to bring:

- Your insurance card, if you have one
- Payment for the visit
- Your list of questions for the doctor
- Something to do in case you have to wait

When you get to the doctor's office

Let the receptionist know you have arrived. You may be asked to sign your name on a paper and write down the time you arrived. The receptionist may ask to see your insurance card, or ask you how you will pay for your visit. You will wait in the waiting room until your name is called. If the doctor is late, it is because he or she is helping someone else who had an appointment before you. Be patient.

The examination room

When the doctor is ready, the nurse will call your name and take you to the examination room. The nurse may take your temperature and check your blood pressure, height, and weight. You may have to wait in the examination room for a few minutes after the nurse leaves, but the doctor will come as soon as possible.

Seeing the doctor

The doctor will come into the examination room and ask how you are doing or if you have any problem that might be a reason for the visit. The doctor will look at any part of your body that hurts you, and may also touch other parts of your body to be sure they are working correctly.

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VANDERBILT KENNEDY CENTER
FOR EXCELLENCE IN DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

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Sometimes, the doctor will ask you questions. You may have questions for the doctor, too. Be sure to ask your questions and share information so the doctor can help you. The doctor may want to do some procedures or prescribe medicine for you to take after the visit. This medicine will help to keep you healthy or to make you better if you are sick.

Before you leave the office

- You may need to make an appointment for the next visit.
- If you get sick before the next appointment, you can call and be seen by the doctor sooner.
- The doctor's office assistant may ask you to pay for your visit.

Vanderbilt Kennedy Center

The **Vanderbilt Kennedy Center (VKC)** works with and for people with disabilities and their family members, service providers and advocates, researchers and policy makers. It is among only a few centers nationwide to be a University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, a *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Research Center, and a Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities Training Program.

IDD Toolkit www.iddtoolkit.org

The IDD Toolkit website offers health care information for primary care physicians and nurses to provide improved care to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Checklists and disability-specific tables may help guide medical treatments and preventive care. Sections address informed consent and behavioral and mental health concerns, including crisis management and prevention. With funding from the Special Hope Foundation, Palo Alto, CA, the IDD Toolkit was adapted for U.S. use based on *Tools for the Primary Care of People with Developmental Disabilities* (Surrey Place, 2011).

Tennessee Disability Pathfinder

Tennessee Disability Pathfinder is a free statewide phone, web, and print referral service in English and Spanish. It connects the Tennessee disability community with service providers and resources. Its website database has 1,600 agencies searchable by Tennessee county and service. Pathfinder is a project of the VKC and the Tennessee Council on

Developmental Disabilities. Contact www.familypathfinder.org, (615) 322-8529, toll-free (800) 640-4636.

Other Resources

• **Health Care Transition Workbook for Young Adults Age 18+**

The Health Care Transition Workbook will help you think about your future and identify things that you are doing now to be independent. http://jaxhats.ufl.edu/docs/resources/youth_families/HCT_Workbook_18up.pdf

• **Life Maps**

Life Maps are a good way to address issues facing young people with special needs. They can also help with long-term planning. <http://chfs.ky.gov/ccshcn/ccshcntransition.htm>

• **Got Transition**

The Got Transition website is dedicated to improving the supports for health care transition for young people with disabilities who move into adult health care. www.gottransition.org

• **Health & Wellness 101: The Basics**

A checklist that you can use that addresses the changing role of youth in the health care process. www.ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/family_health/children_and_youth/pdf/hrtw-transitions-role_for_youth.pdf

• **Health Care Tool Kit**

This 24-page booklet lets you introduce yourself and your health care needs to your provider. www.wi-bpdd.org/publications/2010/Health%20Care%20Tool%20Kit%20Web.pdf

• **The Who, What, When, Where, How and Why of My Health Care and Support Services**

This booklet allows youth to explore their knowledge about their health care needs. Developed by Family Voices of Tennessee and the Baptist Healing Trust. For copies, call (888) 643-7811.

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