

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 a chronic health problem
- To get a physical exam for school, camp, or work

Making an appointment with the doctor

- 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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* The IDD Toolkit and related resources were funded by a grant from the WITH Foundation, Palo Alto, CA.



VANDERBILT KENNEDY CENTER
FOR EXCELLENCE IN DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

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TIPS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

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, educators and service providers, researchers, students, and policy makers. Faculty and staff engage in interdisciplinary research, training, service, and information dissemination and work in collaboration with local, state and national networks and partners.

- » (615) 322-8240 or toll-free (866) 936-8852
- » vkc.vumc.org

IDD Toolkit

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 WITH 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).

- » iddtoolkit.org

Tennessee Disability Pathfinder

Tennessee Disability Pathfinder provides free information, referral sources, and help with navigating services via phone, email, and website. Assistance is available to individuals of all ages, all types of disabilities, and all languages spoken. Its website includes a directory of more than 3,000 agencies searchable by Tennessee county, topic of interest, and other filters. Pathfinder is a project of the VKC and is partially funded by Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities and other state agencies.

- » (615) 322-8529 or toll-free (800) 640-4636
- » TNPathfinder.org

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.

- » pediatrics.med.jax.ufl.edu/jaxhats/docs/hct_workbook_18up.pdf

- **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.

- » gottransition.org

- **Health Care Tool Kit**

This 24-page booklet lets you introduce yourself and your health care needs to your provider.

- » wi-bpdd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/BPDD-HealthCareKit-Complete.pdf

