



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

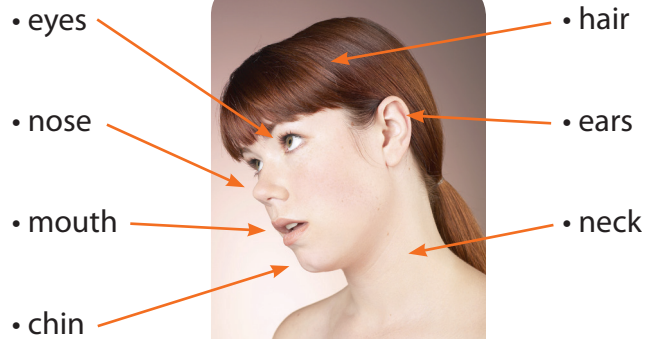
Here are some things you can do before you go to the doctor's office to help you and your doctor understand each other better:

- 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.

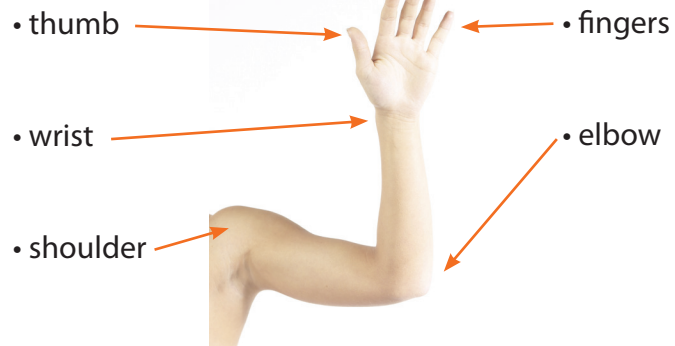
Learn These Words

Knowing these words about the body will help you describe your symptoms.

Head



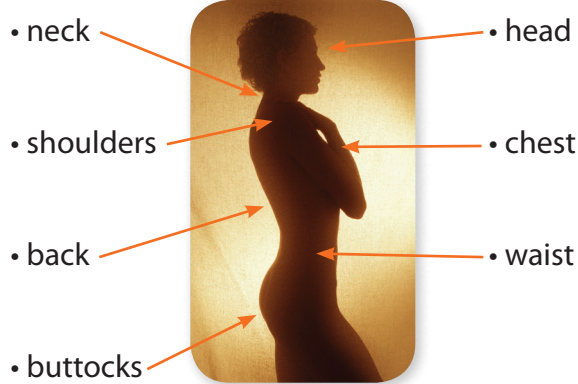
Hands and Arms



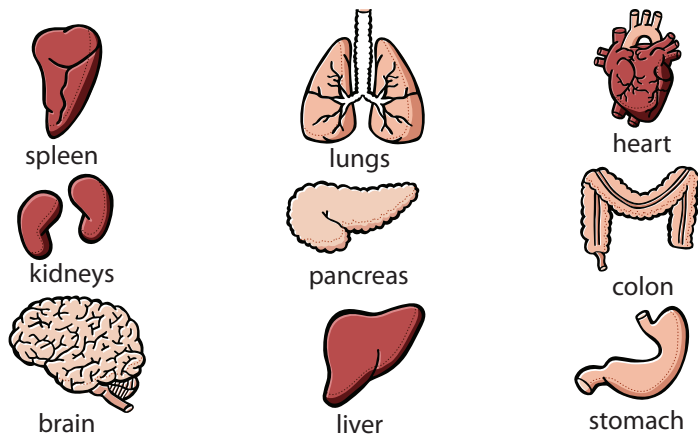
Legs and Feet



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.



Filling Out a Health History Form

It is very important to fill out the medical history form correctly. Your doctor can help you much better if he or she knows your true health history.

- DO NOT just circle “No” if you do not understand something.
- If you don’t understand, ASK for help.
- Get to the **appointment** early so you have time to fill it out.

<u>NAME:</u> _____		<u>DATE:</u> _____	
MEDICAL HISTORY			
Please Circle Appropriate Response:		HAVE YOU HAD:	
NO	YES	Are you in good general health?	NO YES Blood pressure or related problems
NO	YES	Are you now taking any drugs or medications?	NO YES Liver, gallbladder, problems
Which ones? _____		NO	YES "yellow Jaundice", Hepatitis problems
_____		NO	YES Heart trouble
_____		NO	YES Kidney disease
NO	YES	Are you allergic to any medications?	NO YES Diabetes
Which ones? _____		NO	YES Stomach problems, indigestion or ulcers
_____		NO	YES Bleeding tendency or excessive bruising
_____		NO	YES Any part of your body paralyzed or numb
_____		NO	YES Psychiatric consultation
Family Doctor: _____		NO	YES Epilepsy-convulsions or seizures
Phone: _____		NO	YES Broken bones of the face, neck, jaw or back
NO	YES	Would you object to our office contacting your family doctor in regard to any medical problem that may arise?	NO YES Back trouble
_____		NO	YES Abnormal chest x-rays
_____		NO	YES Abnormal Electrocardiogram (ECG)
_____		NO	YES Asthma or other respiratory problems
_____		NO	YES Any medical treatment for nervous condition
NO	YES	Have you ever received <u>local</u> anesthesia (Novocaine or Xylocaine) by a dentist or doctor?	NO YES Excessive scarring
NO	YES	Have you ever received <u>general</u> anesthesia?	NO YES Tuberculosis
NO	YES	Have you ever had any adverse reaction to either local or general anesthesia? Please describe _____	NO YES Thyroid problems
_____		NO	YES Any other illnesses. If so please list: _____
_____		NO	YES A gain or loss of more than 15 pounds in your body weight.
NO	YES	Do you take blood thinners? Which ones? _____	NO YES Abdominal or inguinal hernia
_____		NO	YES History of blood clots in legs or lungs
NO	YES	Do you take vitamins regularly? Which ones? _____	NO YES History of legs swelling
_____		NO	YES Glaucoma, cataracts
NO	YES	Do you take vitamins containing Vitamin E?	NO YES Dry eyes
NO	YES	Do you take aspirin products or anti-inflammatory medicines or headache medicines? Other: _____	NO YES Herpes or Cold Sores
Which ones? _____		DO YOU:	
NO	YES	Do you exercise regularly?	NO YES Wear contact lenses
_____		PLEASE LIST ALL PREVIOUS SURGERIES AND DATES:	
_____		NO	YES Have dentures, false teeth, caps or bridges
_____		NO	YES Smoke? How much? _____
_____		NO	YES Drink alcohol? How much? _____
_____		NO	YES Think you are pregnant? Date of last menstrual period _____
Heart trouble	Tuberculosis	NO	YES Have any contagious or infectious condition
Excessive scarring	Excessive bleeding tendency	NO	YES

To help you fill out a health history form, make a chart like the one below before you go to the doctor so you have the information you need.

My Health History Chart				
Medicines I take	Health problems I have, or had before (include allergies to medications)	Family health history, health problems my family has had	Surgeries I have had, or times I have stayed in the hospital	Questions I want to ask
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Check Your Learning

What is a health history form?

- A form you fill out to apply for health insurance
- A form you fill out so you can ask your doctor questions
- A form you fill out to tell your doctor the health problems you and your family have or had



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

[youtube.com/watch?v=0WKVyoZJSbA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0WKVyoZJSbA)

Ask Me 3

npsf.org/askme3

Talking to Your Doctor

goo.gl/n1dFVc

Questions to Ask Your Doctor

ahrq.gov/patients-consumers/patient-involvement/ask-your-doctor/index.html

Activities

Reep Health Vocabulary Practice

reepworld.org/englishpractice/index.htm

Describing Symptoms to Your Doctor – ESOL Podcast

goo.gl/HViUA2

Visiting the Doctor: Lessons in Language and Culture

www.literacynet.org/vtd

Understanding Medical Words: A Tutorial

medlineplus.gov/medicalwords/

Free or Low Cost Services

NeedyMeds

needymeds.org/free_clinics.taf

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