



FOUR TIPS ON TALKING TO YOUR DOCTOR FOR BETTER HEALTH

No one really likes going to the doctor for their annual physical. Sometimes health concerns are embarrassing. Often, when an illness or injury occurs, Sailors and Marines “suck it up” and may avoid seeing a Doc or not bring it up when they do. But if an injury, pain, or a health symptom persists it may suggest something that will not go away on its own or may become a bigger problem if not treated. Plus, the Agency for Health Care Research and Quality (AHRQ) indicates that people who talk to their doctors and take part in their care are more satisfied with their health care and have better results. To get the most out of your visit, follow these tips to help maintain medical readiness and to live the healthy life you want.

✓ **Tip 1: Make a list**

Make a list of the concerns or questions you have or the topics you want to talk about. Take note of any problems that you are having, the medicines you are taking (both prescription and over-the-counter), and any current medical conditions. It will help you prioritize the points you need to discuss and help you stay on track.

✓ **Tip 2: Be detailed**

The more information you give on your health history, medications, or concerns you may be experiencing, the better. Talk about your symptoms, how long they have been occurring, when you experience them, and what makes you feel better or worse. With this information, providers can make the best recommendations for your health care, tests, or next steps.

✓ **Tip 3: Be honest**

Patients can be reluctant or embarrassed to talk about a health concern, but doctors have heard it all before – if you don't tell them what's up, they can't help. People sometimes fudge the truth on smoking or the amount of exercise, proper use of medications, or if they are really following their doctor's orders. Be honest, this information is important to determine the best care or treatment options for you.

✓ **Tip 4: Ask questions**

Make sure you really understand what's going on and your doctor's recommendations. Repeat your doctor's recommendations in your own words to make sure you really get it and he or she can correct any misunderstandings. Ask for brochures, videos, websites, or other resources that may help you learn more. If you made a list of questions or concerns before going to your visit, make sure you get answers. If you don't understand, ask more questions or ask the doctor to explain again. The AHRQ suggests the following potential questions:

- ✓ What is my diagnosis?
- ✓ What are my treatment options? What are the benefits? What are the side effects?
- ✓ Will I need a test? What is the test for? What will the results tell me?
- ✓ What will this prescription medication do? How do I take it? Are there any side effects? Will this have an effect with any other medications I am already taking?
- ✓ Why do I need surgery? Are there other ways to treat my condition? How often do you perform this surgery?
- ✓ Do I need to change my daily routine? Do I need to make lifestyle changes?
- ✓ Do I need to come back for a follow-up appointment on this concern? If so, when?