

Getting the most from your doctors

by Dr. Delia Chiaramonte, [Baltimore Health Examiner](#)

Going to the doctor can be tough. You may wait for hours and get just a few minutes of your physician's time. Your doctors may not communicate effectively with each other and you might get tests yet never hear the results. The system is chaotic and everyone is frustrated. Here are some simple things that you can do to get the best out of a messy situation.

- Develop an attitude of respectful empowerment – stand up for your needs, while still treating the doctor respectfully.
- Schedule wisely. If you need extra time consider asking for two consecutive visits. Ask the secretary when the doctor is most likely to give you a little extra time (maybe the last visit before lunch or at the end of the day?)
- To minimize your waiting time, schedule the first visit in the morning or the first one after lunch.
- Prepare your questions before the visit. Write them down and bring a notebook to record the answers.
- Bring someone with you for important doctor visits. Your advocate can take notes while you are listening to the doctor, think of questions and help you stand up for yourself.
- Don't assume 'no news is good news.' If you don't hear the results of your tests, call and get them.
- Be sure you understand your diagnosis and instructions. If you don't, ask again.
- Schedule your follow up visit before you leave the office.
- Get copies of everything! When you leave the hospital ask for a copy of your history and physical. A few weeks after discharge, request a copy of your discharge summary. Ask for copies of all your test results and keep everything in a notebook.

You are your own health manager, and no one cares more about your health than you do. Take control!

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