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Knasas: Making your doctor's appointment go smoothly

By Marie Knasas/Ask-A-Nurse

Tue Aug 14, 2007, 03:41 PM EDT

MEDFORD - Welcome to the inaugural edition of the "Ask-A-Nurse" column of Greater Medford VNA. This column is designed so that health care consumers may ask general health care questions to a clinical professional of GMVNA.

This column will appear monthly and questions will be selected from questions received at the email address of Ask-A-Nurse, which is askanurse@gmvna.com.

Now on to this month's question: "Dear Ask-A-Nurse, I am an elderly gentleman with many health problems and I see several doctors quite frequently. My problem is I never know what to bring to my doctor appointments and what information would be important for him/her to know about me since my last appointment. Could you please tell me what I should do to prepare for my visits to the doctor and what I should bring with me? Thanks, anonymous."

Dear anonymous, it is very important that any time you have an appointment with a doctor that you are well prepared for the visit. First and foremost a list of the current medications you are taking is critical.

The list of medications should include prescription medications, herbal medications and any over the counter medications you are taking. In addition you should also notify the physician of any home remedies you might be taking.

Also any allergies whether to medications, foods or other items (like latex, shellfish etc.) is important information for the doctor to know.

Next, if you have a blood pressure log or card, a blood sugar log or are keeping track of any specific medical symptoms it is important that you take that information with you to your doctor's appointment. You will also want to bring information about any other physician appointments, or medical treatment you have had since your last appointment.

This would include the physician's name, address and phone number, the day of the appointment, any tests that were performed, any tests you have in the future and any recommendations that physician made to you. If you went to the emergency room or an urgent care clinic, that information would also be valuable to bring to your doctor's appointment.

You will also want to write down not only any questions that you have for the doctor, but any symptoms or issues that have been bothering you. If you rely on your memory, you may not remember all the things that you wanted to ask, or the symptoms you may be feeling.

If you write these things down in a small notebook and take it with you, then you can write down the answers to any of the questions you had and you can check to be sure that you reported all the symptoms and issues you had written down. This way you will be sure that you have received answers to your questions and passed on the information you wanted the

physician to know.

Remember, the more information that you provide to the doctor, the better able he/she will be able to treat what ails you or diagnose your condition.

Your physicians want to help you and want to treat and evaluate your condition and whatever is bothering you. Any input and information you have is vital to them.

— *Marie Knasas is the executive director of the Greater Medford Visiting Nurses Association. To ask a question, e-mail askanurse@gmvna.com.*

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