



Your Rights at the Doctor's Office

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Doctor appointments to manage your health care should be done in partnership with the doctor. Sometimes it can be hard to know what your rights are and how to advocate for those rights. Below are some of the rights that you have when you are at the doctor's office.

You have the right to privacy and confidentiality. Under the law, your doctor cannot give anyone your healthcare information without your knowledge and permission. This includes your parents. Doctor's offices will often use the terms "privacy" and "confidentiality" to explain their policies regarding keeping your information. This means that the doctor must keep your healthcare information secret from anyone else unless you give your permission in writing by signing a form for them to share it. There are a few exceptions to this law regarding privacy and confidentiality. If you tell your doctor that you are planning to hurt yourself or planning to hurt someone else, then the doctor is required by law to tell someone and get you help. Except in these situations, your doctor cannot share your healthcare information without your permission in writing, by signing a form. Signing a release form is a choice; you never have to sign a release form.

You have the right to bring someone with you to your appointment. It is helpful to have someone with you at the appointment. This person can provide support for you during the appointment. They can also help you focus the conversation with the doctor. Also, the person can help you remember and take notes about what the doctor says.

You have the right to have the doctor explain what he/she is doing when he/she is examining or touching you. When the doctor comes into the exam room, tell the doctor that you want to talk with him/her before they start doing the exam. It can be hard to talk to the doctor about your questions or concerns while they are doing the exam. Say that you want to talk before the exam starts. Use this time to talk to the doctor about your questions or concerns. Ask your doctor to tell you what they are going to do before they start the exam. You have the right to know what the doctor is going to do your body. Ask the doctor to explain what is happening during the exam. It is your body, and you have the right to have your questions about the exam answered, and you have the right to say "no" to an exam if you do not agree that it will be helpful. You also have the right to ask other people such as residents, researchers and medical

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students (anyone in the room besides your doctor) to leave the room at any time.

You have the right to ask questions and have them answered. Your doctor is getting paid to work for you. The doctor is there to meet your needs and answer your questions, so speak up if you don't understand something. This can include questions about things like treatments, tests or medications. You have the right to ask about risks and side affects of different treatment options and/or what to expect if you do not choose treatment. Don't be afraid to ask the doctor to slow down or explain something further. That is the doctor's job.

You have a right to age-appropriate exams. This means that your doctor should be giving you the same exams as he would anyone else your age. Sometime doctors assume your life experience is different because you have a disability. Ask the doctor what exams they would be giving other people your age (physicals, gynecological exams, etc.).

You have the right to be treated with respect. If your doctor does not treat you with respect or you don't like them, consider finding another doctor. You deserve to be treated with respect by your doctor.

You have the right to decide not to follow the doctor's advice or to get another opinion. You are the one who has to live with the decisions related to your health care. It is okay if you decide to not follow your doctor's advice. It is also okay to decide that you want to talk to another doctor to get a different opinion on the healthcare issue you are facing.

You have the right to a copy of your medical records. This can be important for your information or to show other doctors the treatments and medications you have tried in the past. Note: *Some doctors may charge a fee to make copies.*

Resources:

These two resources may not be the most youth-friendly, but they do include some good information:

Patient Rights and Responsibilities: <http://www.consumer.gov/qualityhealth/rights.htm>

Patients Rights Program:

<http://www.patient-rights.org/finger/fingertips.html>

Also see "Tips for Preparing for a Doctor's Appointment," "Surviving a Doctor's Appointment," and "Keeping Track of Your Health Care Information."

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