

How to get the best from your visit to the doctor

Extract from British Lung Foundation Leaflet

Have you ever come out of your doctor's surgery feeling that you haven't got the answers you went in for? This leaflet aims to help you get the most from your appointment.

Before your visit

- Think through what your doctor needs to know. When did the symptoms start, how have they changed, how is your life affected and, most importantly, be prepared to tell him or her how you actually feel
- Decide what you think you need to get out of the visit. Is it medication, advice and/or other therapy
- Prepare a list of what you want to discuss. But remember doctor's routine appointments are normally only ten minutes long, and it is not always possible to discuss several separate concerns. So think about asking for a double appointment if you have a lot to ask about
- Take a relative or friend with you if this will make you feel more comfortable

At your visit

- Listen to what the doctor says. If you don't understand, or if you feel he or she has not answered your question, ask for more explanation
- Make a note of your doctor's comments, or ask him or her for further written information. Doctors can now provide information leaflets that are accurate and can help you understand your illness
- Ask if there is a patient support group which might help you cope with your illness or disability
- Check your list at the end of your appointment to make sure that you have covered all the points you want to know
- Remember don't be afraid to say how you really feel, after all, you are the only person who knows

Many of the tips also apply to visits to Practice nurses, Health Visitors, and Specialist Clinics. And don't forget your Pharmacist. He or she will be able to explain your medications, how these might interact with each other, and any side-effects.