

Keeping Up With Your Parent's Medical Care

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Healthcare experts recommend that you start by learning as much as you can about your parent's illness, its likely course, and current treatments. Contacting a government agency, like the National Institutes of Health (NIH), or visiting its website www.nih.gov, is a good way to find information you can trust.

Ask your parent if you can come along to a doctor's visit. You must have a release form to allow the doctor to share your parent's medical information, or to discuss healthcare bills with Medicare or other insurance providers. Ask your parent to sign it at the doctor's office and keep a copy for your records. See if the doctor will agree to provide telephone or email updates to you, or other family members that live out of town.

Here are a few tips that will help you be an advocate and ally at the doctor visit:

- Before the appointment, ask your parent, their primary caregiver or siblings for any questions they have.
- Bring your list of questions and take notes on what the doctor recommends. This can be helpful later to remind your parent what the doctor said.
- Bring a list of ALL medications and dietary supplements your parent is taking and include the dosage and schedule. (Both prescription and over the counter)
- When the doctor asks a question, let your parent answer unless you have been asked to do so. Always include both your parent and the doctor when you talk.
- Respect your parent's privacy, and leave the room when necessary.
- Talk to the doctor about how best to keep up to date and informed since you live out of town.
- Ask the doctor to recommend helpful community resources.

If you're worried that your parent may be depressed, you may want to discuss this with the doctor before the appointment. Depression is not a normal part of aging. Ask about help available.