

### Getting The Health Care You Need: Section 3

You can make good decisions about your health and your family's health. To make good health decisions, you need to know the following:

- how to talk with health professionals about your health needs,
- your medical history and your family's medical history, and
- how to talk with health professionals about paying for your health care.

#### Talking To Health Professionals

When you call or visit health professionals because you are sick or in pain, they will ask you about your problem. You need to be able to answer these questions:

- “When did your problem begin?”
- “What are your *symptoms*?” (For example, headache, sore throat, fever, or other health problems.)
- “Are you having trouble breathing?”
- “Where do you feel the pain?”
- “How would you describe the pain?” (For example, is it sharp, burning, or a dull ache?)



The health professional might also ask you:

- “Have you ever had this problem before? If you have, how was it treated?”
- “Do you have any other health problems?”
- “Are you taking any medications?”
- “Does anyone else in your household have this problem?”

You don't have to wait for a health professional to ask questions. You know important things about your health. Tell health professionals what you think they need to know. It is important to tell your health professional personal information. Share this information even if it makes you feel embarrassed or uncomfortable.

### Getting The Health Care You Need: Section 3, continued

Health professionals are not the only ones who can ask questions. *You* can also ask questions! If you don't ask questions, a health professional may think you understand everything that was said. You can write down your questions before your visit. List the most important ones first to make sure they get asked and answered. Let the health professional know if you need more time.

For example, you can ask:

- “Can you give me more information about my problem?  
Can you show me a picture?”
- “I don't want to be sick like this again. What can I do?”
- “What does this medication do?”
- “Can I have an *interpreter*? I don't speak English.”
- “How can I pay for my office visit?”



You may want to write down what the health professional tells you. You may want to take a friend with you to help you ask questions.

### Filling Out Medical And Family History Forms

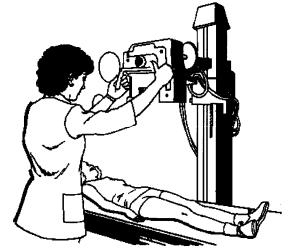
When you go to a doctor's or dentist's office or clinic for the first time, you will have to give your *medical history*. Your medical history includes information about *allergies* (including allergies to medications), surgeries, serious illnesses, and *immunizations*. It also includes information about behaviors such as smoking and drinking alcohol. Your medical history lists medications you are taking. It is a good idea to bring in any medications you are taking when you visit a health professional.



The health professional may also ask you about your *family history*. Your family history is medical information about your grandparents, parents, children, brothers, and sisters. You need to know your family history before you go to the doctor or dentist. Ask your family members about any serious illnesses and other health problems, and when they began. Write down this information and take it with you when you go to the doctor or dentist. They can use this information when they screen you for health problems. For example, if your doctor knows that your grandmother and father have diabetes, then your doctor may test you for diabetes and give you information on how to prevent diabetes.

**Getting The Health Care You Need: Section 3, continued**After A Visit To A Health Professional

Health professionals may give you instructions about what to do after a visit. For example, a dentist may tell you not to eat for an hour. Your doctor may order tests after a visit. For example, if you go to the doctor because you hurt your knee, the doctor may order x-rays of your knee. You will then have to make an appointment and go to a hospital to get the x-rays. Usually, the doctor's office will call you with the test results. Sometimes, you will need to call the office to get the results.



After a visit, a doctor or dentist may tell you to come back in a few days or weeks. The doctor or dentist may also tell you to call the office if you are still sick or in pain after your visit.

A health professional may tell you to see a specialist. For example, your tests show that you have a problem with your heart. The doctor may tell you to make an appointment with a cardiologist, a heart specialist.

If the doctor or dentist gives you a prescription, you must get the medication from a pharmacy. You can ask the pharmacist for *generic medication* instead of *brand-name medication*. Generic medications are cheaper than brand-name medications, but they are not always available. The pharmacist will help you get generic medication if it's available and your doctor agrees.



**Getting The Health Care You Need: Section 3, continued**Paying For Health Care

When you visit a health professional, bring your *health insurance* card or your *government health program* card. If you don't have insurance or are not in a government program, talk to your health professional about a payment plan. At the end of your visit, doctors and dentists usually expect payment from you, your insurance company, or a government program. You need to give your health professionals information about the insurance plans you have or the government programs you are in.



When you call or visit health professionals, they will also ask you about paying for services. You need to be able to answer these questions:

- “How will you pay for your visit?”
- “Do you have health insurance?”
- “Are you in a government health program such as Medicaid, KidCare or Medicare?”

It is important for you and your family to get the health care you need. Health professionals want to help you and answer your questions.

---