



Preparing for Your Medical Appointments



Consulting a mental health provider might be overwhelming, at least for the first time. That's why it's essential to prepare before appointments. It also allows you to advocate for yourself and take an active role in your care. Research shows that active participation in your treatment plan leads to better care and mental health outcomes.

- Learn more about your condition. This will help you better understand your diagnosis and treatment and allow you to participate in your care. Some useful and reliable websites include:
 - **American Psychiatric Association:** psychiatry.org
 - **National Institute on Mental Health:** nimh.nih.gov
 - **National Institute on Drug Abuse:** nida.nih.gov
 - **National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism:** niaaa.nih.gov
- Assemble your complete medical history, including prior diagnosis, symptoms, and a list of current and past medications and over-the-counter supplements with doses and side effects.
- List your questions and concerns ahead of time. You might find it challenging to speak up at the doctor's office.
- Try to get to your appointment early or on time to reduce stress and give yourself time to prepare.

- Ask for a shared decision-making approach. You can ask your provider if they will include your thoughts and priorities when making your treatment plan.
- Tell your provider about your hopes and goals for treatment.
- Ask questions and seek clarification on words your provider is using that you don't understand or on diagnoses or treatments they are recommending.
- Tell your provider if you are concerned that you may not be able to follow certain treatment recommendations for any reason, such as cost or inconvenience, so you can find solutions together.

