



# Health Literacy Tips for Doctor Appointments

## A Consumer Tip Sheet

### Before Doctor Appointments:

- Ask if the office accepts your insurance, has self-pay rates, and how much money you will owe
- Prepare to take your insurance card and photo ID with you to your appointment
- Call your insurance company if you do not understand how much money you will owe
- Write down the time, date, place for your appointment
- Arrange transportation or ask about parking information for the doctor's office
- Write down the questions and concerns you want to talk about in your appointment
- Write a list of all your medications with the dosage and how many times per day you take them, or prepare to take your medications with you to your appointment. Include over the counter remedies, home remedies, vitamins, and herbs.

### During Doctor Appointments:

- Ask the questions on your list
- Make sure you understand:
  - What the main problem is
  - What you need to do
  - What treatment choices exist
  - Why it is important for you to do what is recommended
- For any prescribed medications, make sure you understand:
  - What medication choices you have (for example, name brand vs. generic)
  - Why you are taking it
  - What kind of medication it is (for example, a liquid, pill, gel, spray or something else)
  - How often you take it (for example, every 6 hours)
  - When you should take it
  - What the side effects might be
  - What you might have to pay for the medicine
- Keep asking questions until you understand or are comfortable with the plan

### After Doctor Appointments:

- Read medication instructions before leaving the pharmacy
- Ask the pharmacist if you do not understand medication instructions
- Follow doctor and medication instructions  
\*if you feel uncomfortable, seek out additional medical advice
- Call the doctor's office if you do not get better, or get worse