

# Get the Most Value for Your Dollar: Be Involved in Your Healthcare

**Healthcare reform is all over the news these days and we may wonder what we can do as healthcare consumers. Here are 5 tips to help you be an effective healthcare consumer and get the most for your healthcare dollars.**

Quality healthcare is a team effort. You have an important role to play to make sure you receive the best care possible. Being active in office visits by sharing your concerns and symptoms with your provider and asking questions is crucial. According to the American Society of Internal Medicine, 70% of correct diagnosis depends upon what the patient tells his or her provider. Providers can't read your mind; they need you to share your symptoms and concerns up front.

Another startling statistic from the Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine is that 80% of patients forget what the doctor tells them as soon as they leave the office. And, half of what patients do remember is incorrect! To get the most out of your office visits, practice these tips:

- 1. Write down your questions** – Prior to your office visit, decide what information you need from your visit and jot down your key questions.
- 2. Bring your medications** – or at least a list of your current medications. Also bring any over-the-counter supplements or vitamins you take. It's important your provider knows everything you take.
- 3. Ask questions** – and keep asking until you understand the answer.
- 4. Take notes** – or bring a support person who can take notes.
- 5. Have it repeated** – Ask your provider to summarize the appointment before leaving. Also, to ensure you understand, repeat all directions back to your provider.

**For more information on healthcare quality, and a “Build Your Own Question” list, go to the Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality at <http://www.ahrq.gov/>. Click on “Consumers & Patients” and select “Questions are the Answer.”**

*Patients who are informed, interested, and actively involved  
receive the best healthcare overall. Always!*