

Be an Active Participant in **Your Own Health Care**

Tips for Effective Communication with Your Healthcare Providers

CHA Health Plan



Living with HIV Disease can be a challenge. Decisions about your care and treatment can sometimes seem overwhelming. The tips below may help you prepare better for your visits to your healthcare provider or clinic and get more out of them:

- Bring along any materials you, or your provider, might need, like lab results, your meds, etc. Having this information will help your provider give you better care, and may shorten your appointment time.
- Write down any questions you have before you go, and write down your provider's answers. Keep your questions and answers in a small notebook. This will help you keep track of what you need to know to stay healthy.
- Be on time. Most healthcare providers have full appointment schedules—if you are late, you throw the schedule off for everyone who comes after you.
- Ask your provider about the next visit and what you should bring to your appointment. Write it in your notebook.
- Ask for a list of your upcoming appointments when you check out.

Choosing the doctor who will provide your HIV care is a very important step in getting the treatment you need to stay healthy. Other important members of your healthcare team may include:

- Social workers
- Psychologists/psychiatrists
- Pharmacists
- Dieticians
- Dentists
- Case managers and/or other health professionals

It's important to remember that you may need to direct your questions to different people, depending on what you need/want to know:

• **Nurses and case managers can often answer questions about:**

- » Your medications and side effects
- » The meaning of lab reports
- » Mental health needs you might have
- » Insurance questions
- » Your medical history
- » Your over-all treatment plan

• **Doctors, nurse practitioners, physicians assistants and pharmacists can answer specific questions about:**

- » Medication changes and new medications
- » Clinical trials
- » The meaning of complex test results
- » Surgical procedures
- » Referrals for both medical and mental health issues
- » How your HIV disease is affecting your body
- » Managing your symptoms

Web Sites for Additional Information:

www.poz.com
www.hivtreatmentispower.com
www.thebody.com
www.aids.gov

Source: AIDS.gov US Department of Health and Human Services. Available at: <http://www.aids.gov/hiv-aids-basics/staying-healthy-with-hiv-aids/taking-care-of-yourself/doctor-clinic-and-dental-visits/>