

## How to Make the Most Out of Your Doctor Visit

### A short guide to Your Rights and Responsibilities

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I think a big part of my belief is that deaf people and any person with a disability has to learn to be their own self-advocate. They have to be able to explain what is best to meet their needs. And just be upfront with the doctors.

– Quote from a focus group participant

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The purpose of this booklet is to provide you with some tools when you go to your doctor, as well as provide information to your doctor about people with disabilities.

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#### Some tips on getting ready for your first visit

Before you call for your appointment have your health insurance card(s) ready and if needed:

- × Ask about parking or the bus route
- × Ask if the entrance and exam room are accessible for your needs
- × Ask if there are directional signs or signage for your disability
- × Let them know if someone is needed to assist you
- × Let the office know you are bringing a trained service/assistant animal

#### For your appointment

- × Do not forget your Health Insurance card(s) and picture ID
- × Have a list of your current medications including dosage (how much you take and how often)
- × Bring a list of your over-the-counter medications
- × Write down your questions for the doctor

- × Before your visit, tell the person with you that you want to ask questions on your own

You have the right to: (also see specific disability)

- × Talk to your doctor without anyone else in the exam room
- × Have your doctor talk directly to you, even if someone else comes with you.
- × Ask your questions
- × Know all of your medical options
- × Request your medical results
- × Expect accessible, non-discriminatory and considerate healthcare

What to tell your doctor

- × If someone is abusing or neglecting you
- × If your sleeping pattern has changed
- × How much caffeine (cola, coffee, chocolate) you use
- × Your level of physical activity
- × If your weight has gone up or down more than 7 pounds
- × If you use cigarettes, tobacco products and/or drink alcohol
- × If you use recreational or street drugs
- × If you are sexually active
- × If you are experiencing sexual dysfunction/discomfort

Staying Healthy - some general timeframes

- × Yearly physical
  - Women
    - Pap test (every 1-3 years)

- Mammogram (starting at age 40) [www.mammacare.com](http://www.mammacare.com) – Explains how to do self exams with physical limitations and how to find accessible equipment.

– Men

- Prostate Exam (ask doctor about your timeline)
- × Colonoscopy (start at age 50)
  - × Dental care (twice a year)
  - × Vision Care (once a year)

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## Guidelines/Resources for Specific Disabilities

### Service/Assistant Animals

- You have the right to bring your trained working animal with you to appointments
- Staff have the right to ask how your animal helps you
- You must care for and control your animal

### Resource

“Commonly Asked Questions about Service Animal in Places of Business”  
[www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/animal.htm](http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/animal.htm)

### Blind/visual Impairment

#### Access

It is important to make reliable transportation arrangements to and from any doctor’s visit. Some offices will be near public transportation, but office staff may not be aware of schedules and specifics. Be sure to learn these details on your own as needed. Lighting, signage and physical seating and office arrangements will vary greatly, and it is appropriate to ask staff to show you to a seat, guide your pen for sign-in or help you with paperwork and office layout before and during appointments. Allowing extra time for these needs is a good idea, particularly on the first visit.

#### Example

Jessica has just moved to a new town as a first-year college student. Referred by a friend, she decides to visit a doctor for head aches and dizziness that do not go away. She calls the local bus provider and learns that busses run only every three hours to within a block of the building where she needs to go. After her appointment is confirmed for 3:00, a fellow student orients her verbally the day before on where to go from the bus stop. She arrives with the 2:15 bus, introduces herself, shows her insurance card and requests assistance with the needed paperwork, which a secretary provides. She also requests detailed direction to find the restroom. The doctor questions her carefully about her eye condition, as well as the time she spends on different life activities, her diet and what stresses her. He proposes a limited diet to see whether she has a late-developing dairy allergy and runs some blood tests. Jessica asks the nurse to let her know before the needle goes in. Jessica is finished by 3:40, and not wanting to wait for the next bus, she has arranged for a friend to meet her at 4:00.

#### Resources

- The National Library Service (NLS) serves reading-impaired patrons with a variety of cassette, Braille and electronic books on various topics, including health literature. To become a member in Ohio, or to speak with a helpful reference librarian, call 800-362-1262. [www.loc.gov/nls/](http://www.loc.gov/nls/)
- Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic offers many books not available through NLS on tape, including textbooks on medical topics. To subscribe to RFB&D services, call 800-221-4792 or visit [www.rfbid.org](http://www.rfbid.org)
- [www.fightingblindness.org](http://www.fightingblindness.org)
- [www.blindness.org](http://www.blindness.org)
- Ohio Revised Code (ORC) 2921.321 – Service Animal protection in Ohio
- Robo Braille: (an e-mail based translation service to have written material translated into Braille) <http://robobraille.org>

#### Cognitive

#### Access

- You are to be told what is going to happen at the visit
- Make sure you follow any instructions to medically prepare for the visit (for example, pre-medications, fasting, wearing loose clothing, need for accommodation for a wheelchair)
- You need to bring items to keep you occupied, and money for a drink or food

- Make sure you are aware of the doctor's location and accessibility
- Discuss any accommodations you may need in the waiting room
- Have a language facilitator available if needed (speech-to-speech)

#### Resources

- [www.MRDD/Ohio.Gov](http://www.MRDD/Ohio.Gov) – Every Healthy Person forms
- [www.fcbmrdd.org](http://www.fcbmrdd.org) – excellent link page
- [www.speechtospeech.org](http://www.speechtospeech.org) – national telephone relay service for people with speech disabilities

#### Deaf/Hard of Hearing

##### Access

- If you ask, a physician must provide a paid American sign language (ASL) interpreter.
- You must give the office staff a minimum of 72 hours to make arrangements for an ASL interpreter.
- If you are seeing a new doctor you may want to provide the staff with contact names and numbers for ASL services.
- You should enter a contact on your cell phone called "ICE" (In Case of Emergency). This contact shows what number should be called in case of an emergency.
- If you need an interpreter at the emergency room, let the hospital staff know immediately upon arrival and the hospital must provide an ASL interpreter.
- Most large cities have at least one hospital with 24 hour on call emergency ASL interpreters available. Prior to needing emergency services you should find the names of the hospitals that provide this service
- If you read lips it is important to take steps so you can communicate when the doctor wears a mask such as for dental or surgery. The interpreter may also be required to wear a mask.
- You can excuse an interpreter but medical personnel should never excuse an interpreter prior to you leaving the exam room.

On your first visit

- You should discuss your hearing loss with the doctor to understand their comfort level.
- Explain to the doctor how you want your Deafness or hearing loss treated.
- You may want to ask if they have any other patients who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
- It also is important to explain the best way for the two of you to communicate such as the use of ASL, looking directly at you when speaking, talking louder or writing important information on paper/screen.
- You always should ask the doctor for pamphlets regarding a diagnosis or treatment.
- Let the doctor know if you prefer email or captioned audio materials to view.

Resources

- <http://www.rid.org/interpreting/hiring/index.cfm> is a guide on how to hire an interpreter
- <http://www.rid.org/ethics/overview/index.cfm> If an interpreter has violated confidentiality around your medical appointments you should GO ONLINE TO THE RID WEB SITE, REGISTER INTERPRETERS FOR THE DEAF.
- Ohio Alliance of Community Centers for the Deaf  
Web: [CCDAlliance@oal.com](mailto:CCDAlliance@oal.com)
- Mid-West Center on Law for the Deaf  
Website: [www.mclld.org](http://www.mclld.org)  
TTY: 800.895.3654
- [www.hearingloss.org](http://www.hearingloss.org) Hearing Loss Association of America

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“I keep a list of interpreters I prefer and a second list of interpreters I don’t want to use because of conflict of interest.”

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“Eye exams are difficult because the room is dark. You need to practice with the interpreter so she has the best placement for you to see her providing instruction.”

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“Vision is a real concern, because we depend on our vision. I know when I go to get tested for my eyes, I explain again to them that they shouldn’t talk to me while I am at the appointment. Give me the instructions in the beginning or tap me and I’ll look over and you can explain what I am suppose to do now, look for the red dot or whatever.”

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### Mobility/Wheelchair User

#### Access

- Make sure you have accessible transportation, for your needs, to and from your doctor’s visit.
- If you are not using public transportation, ask about accessible parking (for car or van) and type of parking payment if needed (ticket, machine, or person).
- Make sure you can enter/exit the building, bathrooms, and exam rooms.
- Ask questions about steps, ramps, elevators, style of door opening, if they have a lowered surface for you to write on (for any paperwork you may need to do), type of scales used, and doorway size.
- Ask if they have staff to help you or should you bring an assistant (if you need it).
- Wear “easy” clothing to assist you (depending on your type of doctor visit). This may include: loose sleeves; shirts, skirts, pants, or shorts that are not hard to get on/off; shoes that quickly come on/off (especially if it is your first visit with them).

#### Resource

- <http://www.welnerenabled.com> Welner Enabled designs and builds products and devices that enable people with disabilities to access medical diagnosis and treatment, i.e. examination tables.
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## General Resources

- [www.ada.gov](http://www.ada.gov) Information and technical assistance on the Americans with Disabilities Act
- [www.bhawd.org](http://www.bhawd.org) Breast Health Access for Women with Disabilities
- [www.cms.hhs.gov](http://www.cms.hhs.gov) Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services has comprehensive website; identifies billing and appeals process
- [www.familyvoices.org](http://www.familyvoices.org) Family Voices Information and Publication links to external resources; speaking on behalf of children and youth with special health care needs.
- [www.jfs.ohio.gov](http://www.jfs.ohio.gov) Ohio Job and Family Services, Ohio Medicaid. Medicaid Consumer Hotline: 800-3245-8680.
- [www.nrhrehab.org](http://www.nrhrehab.org) National Rehabilitation Hospital specializes in treating persons with physical disabilities and other neurological and orthopedic conditions.

This list is not an exhaustive list of resources.

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This booklet provides only general information. It is for informational and educational purposes and should not be used to diagnose or treat a medical condition. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice relative to your specific medical condition. Always seek the advice of your doctor or other qualified health provider.

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The Ohio Governor's Council on People with Disabilities exists to:

- Advise the Governor and General Assembly on statewide disability issues.
- Educate and advocate for:
  - Partnerships at the local, state and national level.
  - Promotion of equality, access and independence.
  - Development of employment opportunities.
- Promote the value of diversity, dignity and the quality of life for people with disabilities.

- Be a catalyst to create systemic change promoting awareness of disability-related issues that will ultimately benefit all citizens of Ohio.

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Governor's Council on People with Disabilities  
400 E. Campus View Blvd.  
Columbus, Ohio 43235-4604  
1-800-282-4536 extension 1391