

Healthy Thoughts: Making the Most of Your Doctor Visit

Provided by ERH Parish Health Ministry

“And God breathed into man’s nostrils the breath of life.” (Genesis 2:7)

It's Sunday evening after a full day of church service, lunch with family, and an afternoon outing, when you finally glance at your calendar to remind yourself of the upcoming week's events and schedule. It's then you are suddenly reminded of the 10 a.m. Monday morning appointment with your family practitioner, made three weeks earlier. Before heading up to bed, it's a good idea to think about the following:

- Is my current medical insurance card and driver's license in the billfold, wallet, or purse that I'm taking to the appointment?
- What, if any, are the specific complaints I want to discuss with the doctor, physician's assistant, or nurse practitioner? Jot down a few reminder notes, if necessary, and take a note pad with you.
- If you will be requesting refills on prescription medicines, or anticipate needing something new, have available the name and phone number of the pharmacy you use. If you refill some prescriptions at one pharmacy and others elsewhere, make sure this information is conveyed. This will become increasingly important as e-prescribing expands and patients will no longer be handed a sheaf of familiar paper prescriptions.
- If your appointment is with your eye doctor, take any prescription eyeglasses with you so they can be checked, and tuck in a pair of sunglasses if you receive drops to dilate your pupils. The same goes for hearing aids, if visiting an audiologist, or bite guards and any other dental appliances, if seeing the dentist.
- After your appointment is concluded, prescriptions are refilled and you are back home, it's prudent to place any instruction sheets in a file or binder for future reference

- especially in the event outpatient testing or a procedure is necessary.

- Also, never assume that results of blood work, Pap smears, radiological exams, or pathology reports are normal or of no consequence just because you do not hear back from the doctor's office. Family members have been known to accidentally erase answering machine messages from physician's offices, and labs may inadvertently fax or electronically transfer results to a satellite office, so it's best to call your doctor's office for the results if you have not heard, or if you're unsure about follow-up.

A few tips to keep in mind if you have to reach your provider after office hours:

If you need the doctor on-call to return your call, make sure you leave a phone line open so it doesn't result in a busy signal at 3 a.m. Leave a cell phone number if your land line will be in use. Also, have your pharmacy information, name and, phone number readily available - while this information may be in your chart, it is likely not immediately available to the on-call physician.

While this is not an exhaustive list of recommendations, it may provide a few reminders to help you make the most from what is often a *brief*, annual or semi-annual event.

Thanks to Susan Brokaw, MD for contributing this article.



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Healthy Thoughts: Walking as a Body, Mind, Spirit Exercise

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“So I do not run aimlessly, I do not box as one beating the air.” (1 Corinthians 6:19)

There’s good news to share from the Centers for Disease Control: in one of their Vital Signs Reports dated, August 7, 2012, the percentage of adults who walk at least 10 minutes at a time increased over the time period 2005-2010. The 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommend greater than or equal to 150 minutes/week of moderate intensity aerobic physical activity (e.g. brisk walking) for substantial health benefits.

Walking is the most commonly reported physical activity by U.S. adults. Walking can be done indoors or out, alone or in groups, requires no special or expensive equipment except for well-fitting and comfortable shoes and demands no special skills or facilities. Walking has the added bonus of being a potential multipurpose activity, such as transportation as well as leisure-time activity.

You’re thinking, “Hmm, 150 minutes, that sounds like a lot; who has that kind of time?” Broken down it’s a bit less than 30 minutes/day. Incorporating walking into your daily routine can be easier than you think! In nice summer weather it’s an after dinner constitutional in your neighborhood or a walk in an area park after Sunday church services. In inclement weather, area malls open early for walkers or exercise DVDs featuring walking workouts can be turned on any time of day.

The definition of “brisk” in terms of walking is also important. For most people, “brisk” means about 3 mph or a 20 minute mile while fitter individuals should achieve a 15 minute mile or 4 mph. Brisk also means that you should be able to talk, but not sing along with the tune streaming in your ear buds.

Use the first 5 minutes to warm-up walk, then gradually increase the pace for 20 or so minutes, and the last 5 to cool down your walk. Even if you can only manage 5 minutes at first, the mere fact that you are laced up, off the sofa and out the front door is a step in the right direction. The idea is to simply start and work on a goal gradually so that, over time, the daily 30 minute walk becomes as habitual and necessary as brushing your teeth, bathing or eating dinner.

The physical benefits of walking include weight management, reduced incidence of coronary heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and some forms of cancer. Mental health is also improved by regular walking: rates of depression and anxiety are reduced. For individuals of faith, walking is a good time for spiritual reflection on the readings of the day, a time to pray mindfully for friends or family members who have asked specifically for your prayers, to say a Rosary or a prayer of Thanksgiving to our Creator for the sheer joy of being.

Source: Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) Vital Signs: Walking among Adults - United States, 2005-2010 August 7, 2012

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