

# Going with a Family Member to the Doctor

## Why would I go to my family member's doctor visit?

It can be helpful to have you there. You can help during and after the visit by:

- Letting the doctor know the patient's concerns and issues, if needed
- Translating for the patient if there are language or cultural barriers
- Helping the patient understand the diagnosis and treatment, such as taking medicine
- Helping the patient make treatment decisions
- Remembering and helping the patient follow the doctor's advice and instructions

## Who is considered a family member of the patient?

Family usually includes parents, children, siblings, or a spouse/partner. However, you do not have to be related to the patient to be considered a family member. Other examples of "family" at a doctor's visit are the patient's hired caregivers, neighbors, friends, or clergy and church members.

## What should I do at the doctor visit?

The office visit is for the patient. Do not ask the doctor to take care of your medical problems during this visit. Make a separate appointment for yourself if you need medical advice or treatment unrelated to the patient.

Give the doctor time to talk separately with the patient. Unless he or she is unable to do so, let the patient answer the doctor's questions.

If you are the caregiver, let the doctor know if you feel overwhelmed with caring for the patient. To help prevent burnout, the doctor may offer information and/or refer you to someone who can help.

If there are problems in the family, the doctor can make a referral for family therapy.

## Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

AAFP's Patient Education Resource

Web site: <http://familydoctor.org/719.xml>

Healthcare Information Guide

Web site: <http://www.healthcare-information-guide.com/friend-or-family-member.html>

New Health Partnerships

Web site: <http://www.newhealthpartnerships.org>

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**This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.**

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