

Take Charge of Your Health Care: What to expect from your care and how to get it.

When you go the doctor for tests, does someone contact you with the results? Does your doctor give you clear instructions about how to take care of a medical problem and what to do if it gets worse? Does your doctor have up-to-date information about your medical history and listen carefully when you talk about your current problems or concerns?

If you answered "yes," you are most likely getting the kind of care medical experts believe every patient should expect. If you say "sometimes" or "not at all," then you and your doctor have some work to do. Getting good medical care is a partnership between you and your doctor.

As a patient, it is important to know what you should

expect to get from your doctor's office and how you and your doctor can work to improve your care.

Here are a few things to keep in mind the next time you see your doctor.

When you go to the doctor because of a medical problem, you should expect that your doctor will clearly explain what the problem is and ways you can care for yourself. This includes what medicines to take and how to take them, as well as when you can expect to feel better or what to do if your condition gets worse.

You should:

* Ask questions and make sure you understand the answers.

* Make a list of all your questions before your

appointment and take notes on what the doctor says.

* Let your doctor know if you are confused or don't understand.

When your doctor sends you for a test, you should expect to be told when and how you will get the results. Your doctor or someone else from the office should contact you about your test results as soon as possible and in a manner that respects your values, beliefs and concerns. You should ask when you will hear about test results and call the doctor's office if you do not get test results when expected. Don't just assume that "no news is good news."

The Patient Experience includes everything that happens before, during

and after a visit to your doctor's office and is closely linked to quality of care.

That is why Massachusetts Health Quality Partners (MHQP) asks adult patients and parents of pediatric patients throughout the Commonwealth to report on their patient experience with their doctors' offices, such as how well doctors communicate and listen to their patients, how well doctors know their patients, and how well doctors coordinate the care their patients get from other doctors.

Go to www.mhqp.org to see what other patients report about your doctor's office on these important aspects of the doctor-patient relationship, and compare the results with almost 500 primary care doctors' offices statewide. You will also find more tips on how you and your

doctor can work together to improve your care.

MHQP is an independent, non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of health care for people in Massachusetts. Doctors in Massachusetts trust MHQP's Patient Experience Survey results to provide them with important patient feedback that

they use to improve the care they give to patients. As a patient, you can use MHQP's Patient Experience Survey results to gain a better understanding of what you should expect from your medical care, and how to make sure you get it.

To learn more about how primary care doctors provide care in Massachusetts and what you can do to help improve the quality of your care, visit www.mhqp.org.



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Checklist: Expect the Best - What You and Your Doctor Can Do

There are important elements of care that patients and their families should expect to get as part of good primary care. Use this checklist to work with your doctor to get the best quality health care for you and your family.

✓ Expect your doctor to take the time to give clear instructions on what to do to take care of your medical problem.

What Your Doctor Can Do:

- Clearly explain your medical problem(s), what to do to take care of the problem(s), and make sure you understand the instructions he or she gives you.

What You Can Do:

- Ask questions and make sure you understand the answers. Let your doctor know if you are confused or do not understand.

✓ Expect your doctor to be informed and up-to-date about the care you received from specialists or other health care providers.

What Your Doctor Can Do:

- Follow-up with specialists. When your primary care doctor refers you to a specialist, he or she should know about the care and advice you were given.

What You Can Do:

- Let your doctor know about other doctors or health care providers you see.

✓ Expect your doctor to know the important information about your medical history.

What Your Doctor Can Do:

- Learn about your medical history and current health problems. As a new patient, your doctor should ask about your medical history.

What You Can Do:

- Give your doctor complete and accurate information, including current health problems, as well as your medical history.

✓ When your doctor orders a test, such as a blood test or x-ray, expect your doctor's office to follow-up to give you the test results.

What Your Doctor Can Do:

- Give test results in a timely and sensitive manner.

What You Can Do:

- Find out when you will hear about test results. Call the doctor's office if you do not get test results when expected. Do not assume that "no news is good news."

Visit www.mhqp.org for more tips to getting quality health care.

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