

Medical care is a two-way street.

Medical Communication:

Good communication with your health care provider is important to ensure your child has the best care available.

Your doctor or health care provider needs clear information about your child's development and health to make a diagnosis and provide preventative care. Take your child to see her health care provider for regular check-ups as well as when she's sick.

Well-baby and well-child visits enable the doctor to see how your child is growing and alert him to early signs of problems.

Here is a typical schedule of visits:

- * **First year:** Visit within two weeks of birth, then at two, four, six and nine months. Babies are weighed, and measurements are taken of head circumference and body length. Immunizations begin. Checks for heart murmur, hip dislocations, foot and leg development, vision and hearing.
- * **Second year:** Visit at 15 and 18 months. Weighing, measurements, immunizations. Checks for hearing, vision, coordination.
- * **Two to six or seven years-old:** Annual visits with updates of checks made in the second year.

To get the most out of your visit to the doctor:

- * State any problems or concern as clearly as you can to the doctor.
- * It may help if you write down the symptoms that have been bothering your child, noting when they started, their frequency etc.
- * Let your child speak for herself if she wants to. Then, add details you consider significant.
- * Ask the meaning of any phrases or terms you don't understand.
- * Ask if there are alternative treatments available.
- * Ask for the pros and cons of a recommended treatment and how it will affect your child.
- * If you accept the doctor's recommendation, then follow her directions carefully. Remember to complete courses of medication, and do not save any unused portions.

Help your child develop a good relationship with her doctor:

- * Dress small children and babies in easily removed clothes.
- * Bring toys or books to entertain young children.
- * Bring snacks in case you need them after a visit.
- * Show your child that you trust the doctor.
- * Don't use negative words like 'hurt' or 'cry' because even small babies pick up the nuances of your tone.
- * Use a cheerful voice, and move in a confident and brisk way when moving baby to a table or restraining her.
- * Encourage older children to talk to their own doctors. Act as intermediary as necessary.
- * Encourage older children to participate in discussions about follow-up care, for example, who will be responsible for remembering the medicine.
- * Transfer responsibility for medical communications gradually. Middle-school age children should be encouraged to have some visits in private with their doctor.