

If the thought of an appointment with your child's doctor causes a little stress, these tips will help you and your child with special health care needs get the most out of every doctor's appointment.



BEFORE THE APPOINTMENT

Be Prepared

Be ready to talk about your child's condition(s) using facts and specific examples that explain your concerns. The best way to remember everything is to have it written down, or available on your phone. Time is valuable and coming to these visits prepared will make them more productive for you and your child's doctor.

Be focused

Know how you want to answer the question, "What is the reason for your visit today?" You will only have time to bring up a few concerns at each visit so decide in advance which issues are most important to discuss with your doctor.

Keep a care notebook

Use a care notebook, an online app or a desk calendar to track the different things you notice in your child's behavior, illness, temperatures, eating habits or anything else that your child's provider may need to know.

Keep medical records

You have the right to copies of your child's medical records including tests, procedures and their results. Also, if you are able, sign up for MyChart, or other online system used by your health system. This makes accessing medical records quick and easy.

Prepare your child

Tell your child what to expect, who you will be seeing, why this appointment is important, and the tests that may be done. For younger children, bring a comfort item, some fidgets, a snack and some books to keep them occupied while you speak with the doctor.

Tip for Families

You know your child best so follow your instincts! If you aren't comfortable with your child's diagnosis or treatment plan, speak with the provider right away.



DURING THE APPOINTMENT

Ask questions

Doctors want you to ask questions! And don't be embarrassed to ask for an explanation if you don't understand something the doctor has said.

Do your part

Be an active listener and take notes during the appointment. You cannot control how well another person listens but you can make sure you're doing your part.

Make sure you understand

Ask your child's doctor to explain the care or treatment plan and put it in writing. Then, repeat the care plan back to the doctor as you understand it.

Remember the dates

Keep track of target dates for getting test results or discussing a specialist's suggestions in your child's care notebook, and follow up on them by sending a message to your child's doctor.

Be organized

If you don't have time to get answers to all of your questions at the appointment, leave your list with the doctor and ask for a call to discuss them. Also ask when you should expect to hear back and don't be afraid to follow up with the clinic if you have not heard back in a reasonable amount of time.

Think team effort

If you think that there will be major information, diagnosis or treatment plans discussed at the appointment, bring a trusted friend or family member along to listen and take notes for you.



AFTER THE APPOINTMENT

Have confidence

Ask for a second opinion if you feel it is needed.

Look for progress and side effects

If your child's medication, or other treatment, doesn't seem to be helping, you're seeing side effects, or have any other concerns, **trust your instincts!** Contact the clinic right away and explain your concerns.

Change doctors, if necessary

If, after several appointments, you don't feel that your concerns are being heard or there are on-going problems coordinating your child's care with this doctor, you may want to think about changing providers. See the Family Voices fact sheet, [Finding the Right Doctor for Your Child](#), for more information on this process.

Still Have Questions? Need Help Finding Services for Your Child?

- [Regional Centers for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs](https://dhs.wisconsin.gov/cyshcn/index.htm)
dhs.wisconsin.gov/cyshcn/index.htm
- [Well Badger Health Resource Center](https://wellbadger.org)
wellbadger.org or 800.642.7837

