



Tips for Planning for the Future Becoming an Informed Healthcare Consumer

1. **Build a relationship with your provider.** Think about how you want to talk with your doctor. Think about how you might want to take on more responsibility for your care and how the doctor can assist you in learning more about your health and caring for yourself. Talk about your future and what your plans are for school, employment, relationships, etc.
2. **Bring a list of your questions.** Take some time before an appointment to write down your questions. Take the list with you to the appointment. While at the appointment, be sure to ask questions about anything you do not understand. Some good questions might be: *what do I need to do?* Then-*why is it important to do this?* This will assist you to better understand your health needs and help you to follow what the doctor asks you to do.
3. **Carry health information in your wallet** such as a care plan which summarizes your special health care needs. Carry a list of medications with you at all times.
4. **Connect with peers like yourself.** Get involved with camps or support groups. Meeting other youth with the same or similar health care needs can help you learn more about your health and give you new friends who understand your special needs and share similar feelings and experiences. Ask your doctor about opportunities to meet other youth with special health care needs or disabilities. Are there activities in the community like teen gatherings or are there other youth he provides care for who might want to meet.
5. **Know about your diagnosis** and how to manage your special health needs. Be confident in your knowledge of your medical care.
6. **Keep your appointments.** If you are unable to come to your appointment, call ahead and re-schedule. Talk to your doctor about scheduling appointments at times that do not interfere with school or after school activities.

7. **Have a support system with family/friends.** Having a support system to assist you in your health care needs, or making important decisions will make it easier for you to begin to take more responsibility for your own healthcare. Even after you are an adult, it is important to have a support system to be there to help problem solve or brainstorm ways to stay healthy.
8. **Consider seeing the doctor by yourself.** Go to appointments with a parent/guardian, but have them sit outside during the actual appointment so you will be able to have a sense of what it is like to be independent. Talk to your family about seeing the doctor by yourself and how you want information shared. When you become 18 years old, you will be making your own health care decisions, families can assist you, but the decision is yours.
9. **Talk to your doctor about your future plans for school or employment.** Ask about resources that may assist you in these plans for example: the state Department of Vocational Rehabilitation.
10. **Talk with your doctor about your plans for living in the community-**possibilities for housing, driving or other forms of transportation. Ask about resources that would help you with your plans if you need special assistance.

These are just a few tips that we hope will help you as you plan for the future and become more responsible for your own health care. If you need more assistance, now is the time to look for the resources that will be helpful to you.