



COURAGE TO CARE



A HEALTH PROMOTION CAMPAIGN FROM
Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, your federal medical school, Bethesda, Maryland • www.usuhs.mil

STAYING THE COURSE: *Following Medical Recommendations for Health*

While we often look to our doctors and our healthcare system to take care of us, we have a most important role in this process. Our doctors may provide advice: starting a diet to lower our cholesterol and weight, getting a yearly mammogram, having a stress test or taking a prescribed course of medication.

How can we build a good and trusting relationship with our doctor that supports our health, and helps us stay the course?

How many of us have stopped taking medication without consulting our doctor because we began to feel better? It may not have occurred to us that *being on the*

medication is why we are feeling better, a sign that the medication *is working*. How many of us have stopped taking medication because of unpleasant side effects that we did not share with our doctor? In so doing, our doctor was not able to prescribe something else and we may be compromising our health. How can we build a good and trusting relationship with our doctor that supports our health, and helps us stay the course? Here are some tips and advice for achieving both.

Prepare for Your Visit

- Write down your questions and symptoms in advance. Bring this list along with a pen or pencil to jot down answers and take notes
- Provide your physician with a list of all your current medications including the strength and dosage.
- Bring a family member, friend or interpreter (if language or hearing is a problem) to help you process the information and for support.

Communicate Openly with Your Doctor

- Express your concerns and needs. Worry and concerns over side effects and sensitive topics, like sexual functioning and weight gain, are points your provider is ready to discuss.
- Ask for clarification. If you do not understand something, do not hesitate to ask again, or ask to have your doctor write it down.

Request a Treatment Suitable for Your Lifestyle

Think of anything that might present a barrier to following whatever is prescribed (e.g., need for additional medical screening, a health plan, or another medication).

- If you have trouble swallowing a pill, ask if it comes in liquid. If you tend to be forgetful or work in an environment not conducive to taking medication, ask if a medication comes in time-release capsule or less frequent dosing.
- Utilize your doctor's resources (e.g., does your doctor have a nurse practitioner or case manager who is readily available via telephone?).

Reinforce good health habits for your entire family

- Use your health behavior as an example to your children. Explain the importance of washing hands, covering one's mouth while coughing, eating foods to maintain healthy weight and nutrition, and most of all the importance of incorporating these behaviors into your daily routine.

COURAGE TO CARE is a health promotion campaign of Uniformed Services University. Its purpose is two-fold: to provide quality health information reflecting our University's excellence in military medicine and to present it in a friendly, appealing format for immediate distribution for the health promotion needs in your community.



Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
Bethesda, MD 20841-4799 • www.usuhs.mil