

- ❑ Keep medications out of the reach of children.
- ❑ Never hesitate to call your doctor if you're concerned about the medication you are taking.

Anticipate Medical Emergencies

- ❑ Know CPR and first aid.
- ❑ Keep your doctors' phone numbers and emergency numbers near the phone at home and work.
- ❑ If you have an emergency, notify your doctor to ensure health insurance coverage.
- ❑ Know your health insurance coverage for out-of-state emergencies.
- ❑ Keep a first-aid kit at home and in the car.
- ❑ Only use the emergency room for immediate care.

Hospital Hints

- ❑ To save money and time, have tests done before you are admitted.
- ❑ Avoid being admitted on weekends.
- ❑ Know what services are covered by your health insurance.
- ❑ Carefully check your hospital bill.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON
HEALTH AND WELLNESS CONTACT:**

Visit the UT Extension Web site at
<http://www.utextension.utk.edu/> and
the Family and Consumer Sciences Web site at
<http://www.utextension.utk.edu/fcs/>

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UT Extension

SP526-J

Be a Smart Health Care Consumer



**A wellness publication
written by**

**Barbara P. Clarke,
Professor**

Personal and Community Health

Only you are responsible for your health. Learn to use smart health care consumer skills. (✓) Check those health actions you plan to try:

Be a Partner with Your Health Care Provider

- Provide a thorough medical history.
- Have medical records sent to your doctor before your visit.
- Keep a record of your symptoms.
- Bring medicines: prescribed, over-the-counter and vitamin/mineral supplements.
- Take notes during your visit to help you remember later.
- Have an annual physical.
- Choose a physician with whom you are comfortable.

Make Lifestyle Choices

- Stay physically active.
- Eat the MyPyramid.gov way.
- Manage your stress.
- Balance family, work and personal needs.
- Use safety practices at home, at work and while traveling.
- Protect skin from the sun. Use SPF of 15 or more.

Take Charge

- Know what your health insurance covers.
- Choose the services that fit your medical situation such as:
 - Office visit.
 - Non-emergency surgery.
 - Outpatient services.
 - Emergency room.
 - After-hours clinic.
- Know your medical coverage when traveling out-of-state or out of the country.

Be Prepared When Meeting with Your Doctor about a Medical Procedure

- Remember you are paying for the time with your doctor, so take time to ask questions until you understand and agree with the medical decision.
- Don't be afraid to question your doctor's recommendations. You have to live with the decision.
- Ask your doctor these questions:
 - What is the name of the procedure and what will be done?
 - What is the reason for this procedure?
 - What benefit can I expect?
 - What are the odds that I will get the benefit?
 - Are there other choices?

- What are the possible complications or side effects?
- How much will it cost?
- Will medical insurance cover the cost?
- How can I participate in making the decision?

Don't Forget Self-care Practices

- Don't hesitate to call your health provider with health questions or problems.
- Keep a record of family medical information.
- Buy a simple health reference book.
- Get regular health screenings.
- Perform monthly self-exams. For women – breast self-exams – and for men – testicular self-exams.
- Check skin for skin cancer.

Take Medication Safely

- Know the side effects of your medicines, both prescribed and over-the-counter.
- Throw away unused, out-of-date medication.
- Consider generic drugs.
- Remember over-the-counter medications and nutrient supplements are drugs.