

Appointments



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Too Many Appointments!

Amy and Steve's new baby, Carter, has many health issues that were found at birth. Carter had to stay in the hospital for two months after he was born. During this time, he had several surgeries. Now that Carter is home, Amy and Steve are excited to finally be together as a family. Their two older children are happy to have their parents and baby brother home.

When they left the hospital Amy and Steve were given a list of Carter's appointments. He is scheduled to see four different doctors, all on different days. After they got home, Amy realized how hard it will be to go to all these appointments. She also noticed that there is no appointment to see the lung doctor, even though Carter is on oxygen.

They live four hours away from the hospital. They only have one car. It is hard for Amy and Steve to be away from home and their other children again. They are worried about missing more time from their jobs. Amy wishes they could see all the specialists within one or two days instead of making many trips.

- What do Amy and Steve need to do to see all of the doctors?
- How can they prepare for Carter's appointments?
- How will they get the information they need to take care of Carter?



What's It All About

Children with long term health conditions often have a lot of appointments. For example, your child may have doctor, nurse, and therapist visits. Appointments for medical tests, procedures and treatment may also be needed. Caring for your child includes coordinating appointments. You are in charge of scheduling, keeping track of, preparing for, and going to appointments. That takes time and can feel stressful, especially when many appointments are needed.

There are things you can do to make appointments easier. Planning and preparing helps you and your child get the most out of appointments.

Planning starts when you gather information needed to schedule an appointment. Having information ready before calling to schedule appointments is helpful. Bringing any information providers need to appointments is also important. Examples are your child's records, medicine list and insurance card. Using a reminder system helps you keep track of appointments. Calendars, computers, and cell phones are tools that may help you remember.

Being involved in appointments helps your child get better care. Writing down your questions and concerns helps you get ready for appointments. Bringing your notes helps you think of what you want to discuss. Asking providers questions when you don't understand or need more information helps you learn more. Asking what you and others need to do and writing it down helps you remember. Knowing the plan and repeating it back to the provider helps make sure you know what to do.

Steps to Learning about Appointments

1. Gather information needed to schedule an appointment.
2. Schedule and coordinate health care appointments.
3. Prepare for appointments.
4. Go to scheduled appointments with information that's needed.
5. Discuss questions and concerns during the appointment.
6. Describe the plan of care after the appointment.

Take Action

Gather information needed to schedule appointments

Certain information is needed to make an appointment. You may have questions about the appointment. Have needed information and your questions ready before you call. Use the Appointment Scheduling Checklist as a guide.

Start by making sure you have basic information about the appointment

- Who do I call to schedule the appointment?
- What is the phone number?
- Who is the appointment with?
 - Name of provider.
 - Type of provider, such as heart doctor, dentist, or psychologist.
- Reason for the appointment, such as seizures, heart failure, or weak muscles.
- Type of appointment, such as check up, second opinion, or sick visit.
- Who referred you? Who said the appointment is needed?
- When do you need the appointment? For example, need today, in 2 weeks, or in 6 months.
- Where is the appointment?
 - Providers may care for patients at several places.
 - Know which place works best for you and your child.
- Who can you contact if you have trouble scheduling appointments?

Review your calendar

- Write down times or days of the week that work best for you.
- Write the days or times that you can't go to appointments.
- You can use the blank Calendar form to keep track of your schedule.

Have health insurance information with you when you call

- Keep insurance card with you.
- You need information about all insurance providers. If your child has private insurance and Medicaid you need information about both.

Take Action

Think of any questions you may have for the scheduler

Write questions down so you remember to ask. The Appointment Checklist has many of the questions you might need to ask.

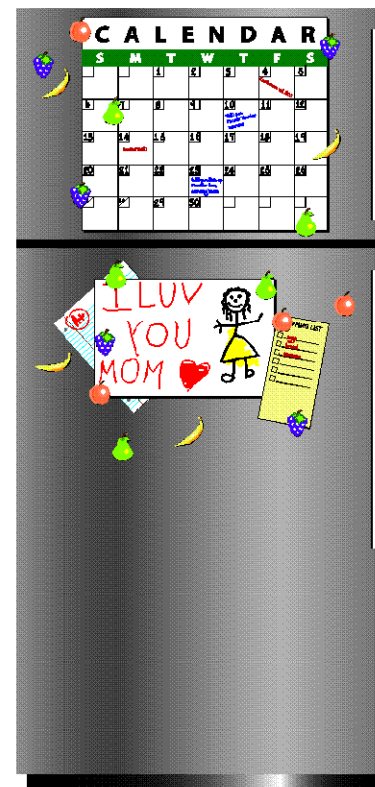
- How long will the appointment take?
- Do any tests need to be done before or during the visit? If yes:
 - Are there any special directions to follow?
 - Who will order the test?
 - Where will it be done?
- What should I bring to the appointment?
 - Do you need any medical or school records?
 - Do you need a prescription?
 - Do you need a referral for insurance to pay?
- Do I need to pay at the appointment?
- Is there anything else that I should bring?

Write down anything else you plan to ask or tell the scheduler

- My child needs special equipment or technology at the appointment, such as suctioning equipment or oxygen.
- I need an interpreter.
- I need to schedule several appointments in the same time period.
- Can you help me make arrangements to stay overnight?
 - Is there a Ronald McDonald House? How can we get a room?
 - Do you have a list of hotels with discounted rates?
- Are there any forms that need to be filled out? Can you send them to me ahead of time?

Tips for coordinating multiple appointments

- Ask scheduler to coordinate more than one appointments on the same day.
- Know how many appointments you and your child can handle in one day.
- Try not to schedule more than three appointments on the same day.



Take Action

Schedule health care appointments

Have information needed to schedule appointments. Make sure you have your calendar and insurance cards. Use the Appointment Checklist or other written notes.

- Call the provider and say you need to schedule an appointment.
- Tell the scheduler if you need to make more than one appointment.
- Give basic information needed to make an appointment.
- Ask the questions you have written down.
- Tell the scheduler what help you need and ask any other questions on your list.
- Repeat appointment date, time, and place back to scheduler.
- Put the appointment on your calendar.
- Ask the scheduler who to call if you have questions or need to cancel.

Know how to handle problems when scheduling appointments

There may not be appointments when you need them. Multiple appointments may not be able to be scheduled on the same day. The doctor might not be taking new patients

- Be calm and polite when explaining what you need and why.
- Ask the scheduler to talk to the provider.
- Ask if there is someone else you may speak with.
- Ask if you can get an appointment sooner at another clinic or place where the provider works.
- Contact your pediatrician, case manager, social worker, or someone else who can help you.

Tips for scheduling appointments

Be clear when scheduling an appointment:

- Why appointment is needed.
- When appointment should be.
- Who appointment is with.

Tell schedulers:

- What days or times work best for you.
- There may not be appointments at your best time but always ask.
- Don't make appointments for times that don't work well for you. For example, if getting to an 8 am appointment is hard, ask for a later time.

Take Action

Prepare for appointments

Write what you want to tell the provider on Appointment Notes form or a blank sheet of paper.

- How things have been going
- Is condition changed or the same?
- How is treatment working?
- Any problems?
- Questions for the provider.
 - What questions are the most important to ask? Plan to ask those first.

Make a list of things you should take to the appointment Use the Appointment Checklist form as a guide

- Health Information
 - Any health and school records needed
 - Medicine list or bring medicines in a bag
 - Contact information for health care providers. You can use the Provider Contact List form.
 - Pharmacy name, address, and fax number
- Forms and other paperwork
 - Written insurance referral
 - Insurance cards
 - Prescription for test or treatment
 - Legal forms such as power of health care attorney
 - Forms you need provider to fill out
- Anything needed to care for your child during appointment
 - Medicine
 - Supplies and equipment
 - Food such as formula, tube feeding, or IV fluids
 - Emergency kit or “go bag”
 - Things to do while waiting
- Money
 - Co-pay
 - To buy food or other items
 - To pay for transportation such as bus, taxi, parking
- Make transportation plans
 - Ask friend or family member for a ride
 - Taxi phone number
 - Bus or train schedule
 - Map or directions
 - Schedule medical van service
 - Arrange transportation to and from appointment
 - Know how long it takes to get there
- Ask for help from others
 - Child care for other children
 - Someone to go with you to the appointment

Take Action

Go to scheduled appointments with information that's needed

- Keep track of when and where appointments are scheduled
 - Use a calendar to help you remember appointments. Calendars may be paper, online, PDA, or cell phone.
 - Put reminders you get in the mail where you will see them.
- Bring information you have gathered and need for the appointment.
- Plan to arrive early so you have time to park, check in, and complete any paper work.
 - Know how long it takes you to get to the provider's office or clinic.
 - Give yourself extra time to get there in case there are problems such as a traffic jam.
 - You can call ahead of time to ask if appointments are on time. If they are running late, ask what time you should come.
- Call if you will be more than 15 minutes late.
- If you can't go to an appointment make sure to call and cancel.
 - Reschedule the appointment at the time that you cancel.

Discuss questions and concerns during the appointment

- Be involved in your child's appointment.
- Having a family member or friend with you may be helpful, but don't let them speak for you.
- Take Appointment Notes form with you to help you remember what you want to discuss.
- Share information with the provider.
- Ask your most important questions first.
- Help make decisions about your child's care.
- Ask questions when you don't understand.
- Ask for more information when you need it.

Describe the plan of care after appointment

- What will I do at home and when?
- What will the provider do and when?
- Will anyone else help?
- What are the reasons to call the provider?
- When is the next appointment?



Check Yourself



- Gather information needed to schedule an appointment.
- Schedule and coordinate health care appointments.
- Prepare for appointments.
- Go to scheduled appointments with information that's needed.
- Discuss questions and concerns during the appointment.
- Describe the plan of care after the appointment.

More Information and Resources

Online Calendars

May help you keep track of your child's schedule. Your email program may have a calendar. There are many free and easy to use online calendars. One example is the Google calendar.

<http://www.google.com/calendar>

Many cell phones have calendar programs that you can use to send reminders about events.

Questions Are the Answer

Website with written, audio, and video information about talking with doctors during appointments.

Lists questions to ask about surgery, tests, and new medicine.

<http://www.ahrq.gov/questionsaretheanswer/index.html>

Tool to help you think of and write down questions about you or your child's needs and health concerns

http://www.partnershipforhealthcare.org/patients_and_caregivers/preparing_for_your_doctors_appointment/

How to make the most of your time with the doctor

This 3 minute video has tips from a doctor about getting the most out of doctor visits. View it online by going to the Partnership for Health Care Excellence website. Click on the video link on the top right side of the page.

http://www.partnershipforhealthcare.org/patients_and_caregivers/preparing_for_your_doctors_appointment/

Children's Hospital of Wisconsin Family Portal

Keep up-to-date schedule of appointments and other health information for free on this website. See and print the information from any computer with internet access.

<https://familyportal.chw.org/>

Appointments Forms

Form Name	How it can be used
Provider Contact List	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use this form to keep track of health care providers . For example, list doctors, home or school nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
Calendar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use this form to keep track of health care appointments.
Appointment Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use this form to prepare for appointments. Completing it ahead of time will help make sure you and your child get the most out of an appointment. • Circle or put a star next to your most important questions or concerns. • Bring it to the appointment. Use it to help you remember your questions and what you want to discuss. Take notes during the appointment .
Appointment Scheduling Checklist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use this form to help you schedule and get ready for appointments. • Review the checklist of things you need and questions to ask before calling to schedule appointments. • Use the checklist while scheduling appointment to help you remember what to tell the scheduler. • Use the checklist to get ready for the appointment. Reviewing it will help you remember what to do ahead of time and what to bring.

Appointment Notes

Use this form to plan before an appointment. Write notes during the appointment to help you remember what you learn. Use the back of this form if you need more room.

Appointment Information

Provider/Clinic: _____ Date: _____

Reason for Appointment: _____

Before Appointment: What do you hope happens at appointment? What do you need to tell the provider?

Questions: Write your main questions before appointment. Write answers during appointment.

Next Steps: What will I do at home and when? What will provider do and when? Will anyone else help? What are reasons to call provider? When is next appointment?

Appointment Scheduling Checklist

Use this form to make sure you know what you need to tell or ask the appointment scheduler.
Check which of these you need to ask.

Appointment information	
Provider's name	Type of provider
Reason for appointment	
Person who referred you	How soon is appointment needed?
Place	
Check your calendar	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have your calendar when you call to schedule.
<input type="checkbox"/>	List days of the week or times of day that are best for appointments.
<input type="checkbox"/>	List days or times when you CANNOT have appointments.
Gather insurance information	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have your health insurance cards with you. If you have more than one insurance provider, make sure you have all cards.
Questions to ask the scheduler	
<input type="checkbox"/>	How long will appointment take?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do any tests need to be done? Will they be done before or during the appointment?
<input type="checkbox"/>	If testing is needed, who will order the tests? Are there special instructions? Do I need to know anything else?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do I need to bring any health or school records?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask for help needed during appointment, such as an interpreter.
Know what to do if you have trouble scheduling	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Person who you can call for help.

Check what you need to bring or do before the appointment.

Health Information	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Any health and school records needed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Medicine list or medicines in a bag (in the containers that they came in)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contact information for health care providers. You can use the Provider Contact List.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pharmacy name, address, and fax number
Forms and other paperwork	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Written insurance referral
<input type="checkbox"/>	Insurance cards
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prescription for test or treatment
<input type="checkbox"/>	Legal forms, such as power of health care attorney
<input type="checkbox"/>	Forms that you need the provider to fill out
Anything needed to care for your child during appointment	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Medicine and items needed to give medicine, such as a syringe
<input type="checkbox"/>	Supplies and equipment
<input type="checkbox"/>	Food, such as formula, tube feeding, or IV fluids
<input type="checkbox"/>	Emergency kit or “go bag”
<input type="checkbox"/>	Things for you and your child to do while waiting
Money	
<input type="checkbox"/>	For co-payment
<input type="checkbox"/>	To buy food or other items
<input type="checkbox"/>	To pay for parking or transportation, such as bus or taxi
Transportation plans	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Arrange transportation to and from appointment
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask a friend or family member for a ride
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have taxi phone number
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have bus or train schedule
<input type="checkbox"/>	Schedule medical van service
<input type="checkbox"/>	Have map or directions to appointment
<input type="checkbox"/>	Know how long it takes to get there
Help from others	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Child care for other children
<input type="checkbox"/>	Someone to go with you to the appointment

Provider Contact List

List doctors, therapists, pharmacies, and other health care providers.

Provider Name			Type of Provider		
Address					
Phone		Fax		Email	
Notes <i>Who to talk to, best time to call, etc.</i>					
Provider Name			Type of Provider		
Address					
Phone		Fax		Email	
Notes <i>Who to talk to, best time to call, etc.</i>					
Provider Name			Type of Provider		
Address					
Phone		Fax		Email	
Notes <i>Who to talk to, best time to call, etc.</i>					
Provider Name			Type of Provider		
Address					
Phone		Fax		Email	
Notes <i>Who to talk to, best time to call, etc.</i>					