

# THANK YOU FOR BEING IN MY MEDICAL PRACTICE HOPE WE CAN SPEND MORE TIME TOGETHER: 10 WAYS TO GET THE MOST OUT OF ANY DOCTOR VISIT (INCLUDING WITH ME)

Hi, Dr. Peter Kim, here. We talk a lot during our visits; in case you haven't noticed, I love to talk. But sometimes our time is limited, and it's a lot to hope that we can cover things that affect your health in 15-30 minutes a year.

I've put together the following insights about how you can get the most out of your medical visits; I'm sure we've touched on several, and you may have guessed the rest. But what follows reveals them in the detail that I wish we always had the time for.

## **1. Look for your doctor to be more like Robert Duvall in *The Godfather* than Arnold Schwarzenegger in *The Terminator***

Or if the criminal overtones bother you, more like Hercule Poirot, the famous detective: when you're worried and not sure of what's happening, it's more reassuring to have a physician who will focus on *listening and considering* rather than on *judging and treating*.

My role is to advise you with compassion and to provide you the most up to date information relating to your health, to explain complex things in relatable ways, and to lay out the pluses and minuses of workup and treatment options. Then I work with you so YOU can make the best choice for your situation. I will never FORCE you into doing anything, or imply that I know your situation better than you. It's your body, your health, and your life; in science fiction terms I'm the Dr. McCoy to your Captain Kirk (lots of TV and movies growing up).

## **2. In these uncertain times, patience for fellow patients helps**

In a primary care practice, people can come in with anything from heart attacks to lung cancer that they didn't know they had. Your time is valuable, and I will do my best to respect that, and if something unexpected happens that I have to address right then and there, my staff will update you during our appointment time.

### **3. Highlight the most concerning list item first**

You should be able to discuss any medical question or problem you have with any of your doctors – certainly with me – and if I don't know the answer, I will know someone who does. But as they say in good writing, *You don't want to bury the lead*. Pointing out the most concerning question on your list – Is there something keeping you up at 2 AM with worry? – lets us skip past secondary matters and focus on what you most need to discuss.

### **4. Prioritize Ruling Out The Uglies First**

Or as I call it, *Start at the tip of the pyramid and work your way down*. The pointy tip is *Do You Have A Medical Emergency?* If you have something that we need to jump on RIGHT NOW OR YOU COULD DIE, like a heart attack or stroke, then everything else should take a back seat.

The next layer of the pyramid is *Stuff On Your Mind That Probably Won't Explode Soon*. Most of your questions or medical conditions like blood pressure or cholesterol will fall into this category, and without an emergency, this should be where we focus our efforts until the questions are answered or the conditions stabilized.

The final, broad base of the pyramid is *General Health Maintenance*, and it's actually the most important layer, where we talk about a complete physical, screening and prevention, cancer testing, and getting a comprehensive picture of your situation to provide context to guide our future discussions.

### **5. Once yikes is off the table, aim for the root cause**

Doctors can “correct” a number of symptoms quickly with pharmaceuticals, but if the underlying cause goes unaddressed, all you're doing is making Big Pharma richer and yourself more dependent on their good will. If meds are the best treatment option, then so be it, but I'll always recommend identifying and correcting the root cause of a problem, which often means fewer or even no prescriptions necessary.

### **6. Circle back if things aren't going the way they should**

There's an expected outcome if the diagnosis and treatment plan are correct, and if things don't turn out that way, maybe the diagnosis or treatment need more work. At the end of any encounter together, I'll discuss a working diagnosis and a plan of action – and this includes a timeline for improvement. If I never hear from you again, that usually means PATIENT GOT ALL BETTER. But if you didn't, or you only got partly better, or you got better but the symptoms came back again, we should keep chasing it.

For this reason, I prefer that you make a definitive follow up appointment to make sure that you've gotten better, that you can cancel as the date approaches if you're doing well. You can even a call with an update like "Please tell Dr. Kim I'm doing great, symptoms all gone now."

## **7. Touch base once or twice a year, like clockwork**

Once every 12 months for an annual checkup/physical, and if you have any chronic conditions, a mid-year follow up at the 6 month mark. You may have a condition like diabetes that needs rechecking every 3 months, you may have nothing active so an annual visit would be fine, or you may simply not want to do general checkups and want to use my services on a "Don't call me, doc, I'll call you" basis. I can work with you on any of these levels, just let me know your preference. But unless you're Jedi master Yoda level in-touch-with-your-body, a regular tune-up will help keep things running smoothly that you may not even be aware were running rough.

## **8. Work with, not against, your doctors**

The days of blindly and meekly following doctor's orders is long gone, with one exception: obey enough to meet the doctor *half way*. If things like a heart attack, stroke, cancer, or Alzheimer's are scary to you, you need to provide all the clues you can and actively work with your doctor, who still hasn't learned to read minds and isn't all-knowing like the Almighty or Facebook.

You should schedule your annual physical...about a year after your last one, and if you haven't had one with me yet, please ask the office to set one up. More than half the battle is YOU staying involved in your health upkeep by scheduling the physical, where most of the testing for Hidden Big Problems happens. I can help you big time if you give me something to work with, but I can't work with what I don't know: I can't advise you if you don't see me, don't follow up as instructed, don't do the tests needed to check for problems, or don't tell me if you stopped halfway through a treatment plan.

Work with me so I can work for you.

## **9. Remember: complicated things have itty bitty parts**

For example, the basic structure for successfully losing weight (or achieving any other health goal) isn't a simple as a two-pronged fork model (diet and exercise), it's more like a 4-legged kitchen stool, so getting just 2 factors dialed in won't work.

Many patients have said *I'm exercising like crazy and eating like a bird, why am I not losing any weight?* The answer is basically that there are at least 2 other critical variables that you're overlooking: sleep and mental/emotional recovery. Matthew Walker, sleep scientist for Google, goes so far as to call sleep not one of the 4 pillars of health, but rather the floor upon which all the other pillars stand. There are medical and scientific reasons for this, which I will discuss another time.

But as a rule, if you've been struggling with lack of progress after putting in a good faith effort, there are probably other factors that you haven't accounted for, and I can help you with that.

## **10. Finally, do you want to kick it into high gear? Because I want to kick it into high gear**

Doing your best to prevent illness and breakdown is a "low" gear that many people never get out of, like driving up a steep mountain road, and if we need to grind at that level we absolutely will for as long as it takes.

But health and wellness can be about so much more than disease, illness, and pills. There are a new developments in conventional and functional medicine that can affect your energy levels, mental focus, bodyweight and fat composition, and strength and activity as we age, in addition to potentially reducing dependence on prescription medications for common metabolic ailments like high blood pressure and diabetes. That's why I created the upcoming newsletter, to share learnings and insights that we normally don't have the opportunity to cover.

I hope you're looking forward to it as much as I am, and I'd very much like to hear your feedback on it, just Reply to any issue, or email your comments and suggestions for future topics to [peter@drpbkim.com](mailto:peter@drpbkim.com). (If there's anything that's actually confidential or medical, though, please just call the office).

Best and Stay Safe,  
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