

Partners in Care

By Lisa M. Petsche

Lisa M. Petsche is a medical social worker and a freelance writer specializing in boomer and senior health matters. She has personal and professional experience with elder care.

Plan Ahead For Medical Appointments

When the relative you are caring for must attend a medical appointment, planning ahead is crucial, especially if they have special healthcare needs. You need to be prepared not only for the appointment itself, but also for the travel and wait time involved.

Follow the advice below to minimize stress and maximize success.

Before You Go

- ✓ If accessible transportation is required, book it well in advance.
- ✓ Don't schedule anything else on the appointment day.
- ✓ If you are driving to an unfamiliar location, call in advance to get directions and information about parking options. Also inquire about the accessibility of the premises in terms of parking, entrances and washrooms, and whether transport chairs are available.
- ✓ Complete any forms received at a previous appointment or by mail – for example, questionnaires or pre-op paperwork.
- ✓ Review any literature received in advance regarding how to prepare for the appointment and what to expect.
- ✓ Ensure your relative wears loose-fitting, breathable clothing and comfortable walking shoes. Layer garments to make it easy to adapt to warm or cool temperatures.
- ✓ If the weather is inclement or you are anxious about parking, plan to take a taxi so you and your relative can be dropped off and picked up at the medical building's entrance.
- ✓ Make a list of everything to bring along. Read on for items you may want to include.



**Family &
Nursing
Care**®

Since 1968



MD: 301.588.8200 • DC: 202.628.5300 • familynursingcare.com

Licensed as a Residential Service Agency by the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Office of Healthcare Quality. RSA License R2519. MD NRSA Lic. 070605.

Plan Ahead For Medical Appointments (cont.)

What To Bring

- ✓ Tickets for accessible transportation, disabled parking permit, parking pass or sufficient money for parking lot fees.
- ✓ Mobility aids.
- ✓ Nourishment. Snacks are especially important if you or your relative are diabetic. If your appointment is near lunch time, pack a sandwich and drink for both of you. If your relative resides in a care facility, request a bag lunch a day in advance. Bring an apron or towel to protect their clothing while they eat, and wet wipes for cleaning up afterwards.
- ✓ Sufficient prescription and over-the-counter medications to cover the time you expect to be away. Bring an extra dose in case the wait is unusually long.
- ✓ Extra incontinence pad or brief.
- ✓ Change of clothes and a plastic bag for soiled garments.
- ✓ Facial tissues.
- ✓ Hand sanitizer (travel size).
- ✓ Medical insurance information.
- ✓ List of all health conditions and medications, including dosages and frequency of use.
- ✓ List of questions and concerns.
- ✓ Note pad and pen to record information and instructions.
- ✓ Cell phone (ensure it's sufficiently charged) or coins for a pay phone in case you need to get in touch with someone.
- ✓ Reading material or other diversionary items – crossword puzzles or personal music player, for example – to keep your relative pleasantly occupied during waiting periods. Bring something for yourself,

When You Arrive

- ✓ Make use of hand sanitizers at building and office entrances.
- ✓ If it's your first time in the building, orient yourself. Consult any layout plans or directories, typically found by main entrances. Find out where washrooms are located, and whether there's a cafeteria, coffee stand or tuck shop for purchasing drinks and snacks. The latter is good to know for future visits.
- ✓ Have health insurance information ready when you check in at the office or clinic. Let the receptionist know of any special needs your relative may have – for example, behavioral issues that may be exacerbated by noise or a long wait. Also advise of special circumstances – for example, if your relative has another appointment in the building or elsewhere, such that time is a concern.

Before You Leave

- ✓ If your relative resides in a care facility: ask the healthcare provider to make a brief note regarding any findings, recommendations and plans. This is important information for you to take back for the charge nurse and the physician overseeing your relative's care. Also inform staff of any tests or follow-up appointments that are scheduled or require booking.
- ✓ If a referral is being made to another healthcare professional, ensure you are clear about their name, area of expertise and location, and the purpose of the consultation.
- ✓ If your relative is being booked for a test, inquire about the typical amount of time involved and whether special preparation is required.

When You Get Home

- ✓ Note any further consultations or tests on your calendar right away. Attach appointment cards with a paper clip, so you have phone numbers handy should you have any questions or need to reschedule.
- ✓ Keep any forms or information sheets you've been given in a labeled file folder, for easy access.



**Family &
Nursing
Care**[®]

Since 1968

Family & Nursing Care

D: 301.588.8200 • DC: 202.628.5300 • familynursingcare.com

Licensed as a Residential Service Agency by the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Office of Healthcare Quality. RSA License R2519. MD NRSA Lic. 070605.