

**TAKE
CONTROL
OF YOUR
HEALTH**

NOTHING MATTERS MORE TO MOST OF US THAN STAYING HEALTHY—AND KEEPING OUR LOVED ONES HEALTHY TOO. BUT NAVIGATING AMERICA'S complex health system can leave us feeling frustrated and confused. Just think how anxious you feel every time you need to sign a consent form, agree to a medical test or visit a hospital.

More and more, Americans are being asked to make the important decisions about their own health. That can be a frightening prospect—or an empowering one.

We're on your side. In this issue and throughout the year, PARADE will give you the tools you need to become a more able, skilled and confident manager of your family's health. We'll show you how to get the most out of your doctor's visit, understand your insurance policies and know what questions to ask to make the best health decisions. Make this the year you take control of your health!

—The Editors

Go to Parade.com

P Get more health advice, e-mail articles to friends and ask questions of Dr. Isadore Rosenfeld—all at Parade.com.

How To Make The Most Of Your Doctor's Visit

By Dr. Ranit Mishori



FIFTEEN MINUTES. EXCEPT FOR unusual or complicated cases, that's about how much time I, and most doctors, get to spend with patients during an average appointment.

The upside is that I can actually see, treat and help many people in a typical day. But it also means that both doctor and patient need to be as efficient as possible to get the most out of that precious quarter-hour.

You can help me. If you come prepared for the visit, we can both do a better job. Here's how:

Before Your Doctor's Visit: Gather the Facts

Be ready with the details of your current medications, recent test results and your medical history.

Let's start with medications. Make a list of prescription drugs as well as any over-the-counter medicines or herbal medications you may have been taking. Here's a tip: If it's too much trouble to write down all the names and dosages, just sweep your whole array of medicine bottles into a plastic bag and bring them with you.

Next, be sure to bring copies of your latest

X-ray or MRI reports or any other test results including reports from specialists you've seen. Include the specialists' contact information—phone numbers, e-mail addresses and so forth. As a doctor treating you, I want to be sure that any treatment I provide works with, and not against, what your other doctors are recommending.

Get your history straight—your medical history and your family's. Your doctor needs to know about any previous hospitalizations, as well as old or current medical problems, even if they are not the reason you are going to the doctor this time.

Genetics matter too. Gather information on the medical background of every member of your family. (For more on how to create a family tree on medical conditions, see page 6.)

If you have diabetes: Record your daily blood-sugar measurement and bring along your log.

Finally, if you have high blood pressure: Get a series of readings at home during the week prior to your visit so your doctor can gauge whether your numbers have spiked just because you are in a busy medical clinic—a phenomenon known as "white coat hypertension."