



GOOD HEALTH IN YOUR HANDS

Improving Communication between
Patient and Provider



The Asian American Health Initiative

The Asian American Health Initiative is part of the Department of Health and Human Services of Montgomery County, Maryland. The mission of AAHI is to work towards identifying the health care needs of diverse Asian American communities, developing culturally and linguistically competent health care services, and implementing health programs that are accessible and available to all Asian Americans in Montgomery County.

This booklet is a resource for community members who desire simple explanations about common health concerns, and who wish to improve communication with their health care provider. The booklet includes basic English terms and expressions that will be useful at the clinic or hospital. This publication is not a substitute for professional medical care or advice. Please see your doctor to discuss your health concerns.



Make the Most of Your Medical Appointment

Communication with your doctor is very important. A good relationship means that information is being shared both directions, and decisions are being made together. Here are nine suggestions to make sure that your next medical appointment goes well.

1. If you need an interpreter, tell this to the clinic when you make your appointment.
2. Arrive early enough to fill out all forms.
3. Bring your medical records, insurance card and enough money to pay the required fees (if any). If you do not have insurance, tell this to the clinic when you make your appointment, and they will explain your options.
4. Write down any of the health concerns that you have, including questions you would like to ask the doctor.

5. Write down the symptoms you are experiencing, as well as any medications you are taking.
6. If your family has a history of a particular disease, be sure to tell this to the doctor.
7. Bring a friend. Having someone with you during the appointment can make it easier to explain your health concerns and understand the doctor's recommendations.
8. Ask questions. Do not leave your appointment until you feel comfortable about the medical issues you have discussed.
9. Follow up. It is important to act on your doctor's recommendations. If necessary, make a follow-up appointment.





Know Your Rights

Medical offices that receive federal funding are required to provide free interpretation for non-English speaking patients. It is helpful to inform the medical office in advance if interpretation services are needed. Here are some expressions you may find useful if English is not your first language.

- I do not speak English.
- I do not understand you.
- I need an interpreter, please.
- Do you have this information in _____ (please insert your target language)?
- Is there a doctor or nurse who speaks _____ (please insert your target language)?

If you do not have health insurance, you may qualify for free or reduced-cost medical services. Please check with your local public health department. Remember—your economic, political or immigrant status does not allow a public health facility to deny you or your family treatment.

Expressions for Communicating with Your Health Provider

If you are learning English, here are some helpful expressions to use at the doctor's office.

- There is a history of cancer in my family.
- I have a headache and fever.
- There is a pain in my stomach.
- What causes this problem?
- Do I need a test?
- When will I know the test results?
- What will this test cost?
- Will my insurance cover the test?
- How much will my insurance cover?

- I do not have insurance.
- What are my treatment choices?
- What are the benefits and risks of this treatment?
- Does this medicine have side effects?
- How long do I have to take the medication?
- Can I take this medication with my other prescriptions?
- Do I need to make another appointment?



Helpful Terms at the Doctor's Office

AIDS A disease of the immune system caused by the HIV virus.

Allergy An exaggerated immune response to substances in the environment.

Anemia A decreased ability of the blood to carry oxygen.

Anxiety A feeling of nervousness, uneasiness, or apprehension.

Artery A vessel that carries blood away from the heart to the farthest parts of the body.

Arthritis Inflammation of a joint.

Asthma A chronic disorder characterized by shortness of breath, coughing and tightness of the chest.

Benign A non life-threatening condition.

Biopsy Removal and exam of a tissue sample to determine if the tissue is cancerous.

Blood clot Blood that has changed from a liquid to a solid state.

Blood glucose The main sugar that the body makes from food. Cells cannot use glucose without the help of insulin.

Blood pressure The pressure of the blood against the walls of the blood vessels.

Diastolic blood pressure. Arterial pressure during the time of rest between heartbeats. This pressure is typically the second number in your blood pressure measurement.

Systolic blood pressure. Maximum arterial pressure occurring during contraction of the heart. This pressure is typically the first number in your blood pressure measurement.

Blood The fluid circulating through the heart, arteries and veins that brings oxygen to body tissues.

Breasts Milk-secreting glands on the upper front part of a woman's body.

Bronchitis Inflammation of the tubes that carry air into the lungs.



Cancer A disease that begins as a growth or tumor. If not detected, it can rapidly spread to other cells of the body. Cancer is not contagious, but often it affects members of the same family.

***Breast Cancer.** Breast cancer is the most common cause of cancer for women. A common warning sign is a lump in the breast. Women should give themselves a regular self-examination, and should talk to their doctor about having regular mammograms, starting at age 35.*

***Cervical Cancer.** This cancer attacks cells at the entrance to a woman's uterus. The most common symptom is abnormal bleeding. Cervical cancer can be diagnosed using a pap smear or other test. Women who begin having sex before age 18 or who have many sexual partners have an increased risk for cervical cancer.*

***Colorectal Cancer.** This is the third leading cause of cancer in men. The colon and rectum are parts of the digestive system. Tumors in the wall of the colon and rectum can become cancerous if not removed.*

***Lung Cancer.** This common form of cancer can be caused by cigar and cigarette use.*

Prostate Cancer. This form of cancer involves tumor growth on the prostate—an organ located under the bladder. Prostate cancer is the most common form of cancer in men and the second leading cause of cancer death.

Skin Cancer. Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the US, with over one million new cases every year. This cancer is usually caused by too much exposure to the sun.

Cardiovascular disease Any disease that attacks the heart or blood vessels.

Cholesterol A fat-like substance associated with the development of heart disease.

Chemotherapy Treatment that uses chemicals to destroy cancer tissue.

Circulation The movement of blood through the body.

Colon The large intestine.

Colonoscopy A visual examination of the colon that may include removal of a tissue sample or a tumor.

Cyst A sac or pocket in the body containing fluid.

Depression Intense sadness, beyond what is normally expected.

Diabetes A disorder caused by the body's inadequate production and use of insulin.

Type 1 Diabetes. A condition in which the body's immune system destroys the cells in the pancreas that produce insulin. A person with Type 1 Diabetes must take daily insulin shots.

Type 2 Diabetes. A condition in which the body does not make enough insulin or cannot properly use the insulin it makes. Type 2 Diabetes may be controlled with diet, exercise, and weight loss, or may require insulin shots.

Diagnosis The process of identifying a disease or medical condition.

Emphysema A chronic lung disease characterized by air trapped in the lung.

Fatigue The feeling of being tired.

Fever Abnormally high body temperature.

Genetic Hereditary Having to do with the genes.



Glucose A simple sugar naturally found in fruits, honey and blood.

Heart failure Inability of the heart to adequately pump blood.

Heart rate The number of heart beats per minute.

Heartburn A burning sensation in the chest caused by too much acid into the esophagus or stomach.

Hemorrhoid An enlarged vein inside or just outside the rectum.

Hepatitis Inflammation or infection of the liver. This virus is transmitted by contaminated blood, by sexual contact with an infected person, or by the use of contaminated needles.

Herpes A skin infection characterized by many small blisters, typically near the mouth or in the genital region.

High blood pressure A condition when the force of the blood against blood vessels is too high.

HIV A virus that slowly destroys the immune system and causes AIDS.

Hypertension Abnormally high blood pressure.

Hyperglycemia A condition in which blood glucose levels are higher than normal.

Hypoglycemia A condition in which blood glucose levels are lower than normal.

Immunization The process of making an individual immune by vaccination.

Indigestion Discomfort usually experienced after a meal due to incomplete digestion.

Infection Disease caused by microorganisms in the body, including bacteria, viruses or parasites.

Influenza (Flu) A sickness caused by viruses that infect the respiratory system.

Insomnia An inability to fall asleep or to remain asleep.

Insulin The hormone produced by the pancreas for regulating carbohydrate metabolism.

Jaundice Yellow color in the skin and eyes.

Joint The place where two or more bones are connected.

Low blood pressure When pressure is so low that blood cannot deliver enough oxygen or nutrients to vital organs.

Lungs The main organs in the chest where blood receives oxygen.

Malignancy A tendency to worsen to a more serious illness or death.

Mammogram An x-ray examination of a woman's breast that can detect cancerous tumors.

Mastectomy Surgical removal of the breast.

Mental health issues Mental health issues affect a large number of people and can be treated through counseling, education, and medication.

Metastasis The spread of a disease from its primary site to another location in the body.

Nausea A feeling of dizziness and sickness in the stomach.

Nerve A cord-like structure that carries electrical impulses from one part of the body to another.

Obesity A weight more than 20% above the normal range.

Osteoporosis A bone disorder characterized by a reduction in bone density, usually found in women and the elderly.

Palpitations Irregular or forceful beating of the heart.

Pap smear A quick and painless procedure to take cells from a woman's cervix and examine them for cancer.

Pneumonia Inflammation or infection of the lungs.

Prescription A physician's written directions for use of a medicine.

Prostate A male reproductive gland that surrounds the neck of the bladder and the urethra.

Radiology The branch of medicine that concerns use of x-rays.

Rash Visual marks or spots on the skin.

Seizure An attack of epilepsy.

Sinus Cavities in the skull that open into the nasal cavity.

Stroke Lack of blood supply to the brain due to blockage of a blood vessel.

Tuberculosis An infectious lung disease caused by bacteria.

Tumor Overgrowth of tissue.

Ulcer A sore on the skin or on a mucous membrane.

Vaccination An inoculation that helps develop immunity and prevent disease.

Vagina The muscular canal in women between the vulva and the uterus.

Vein A vessel that carries blood from different parts of the body to the heart.

Virus An organism that grows and reproduces in a living cell. It is often moved by the blood stream.

We hope this booklet will be a valuable resource as you seek to understand the health issues that you and your family face, and as you use the American health care system. Our goal is to give you the tools you need to communicate your concerns, to understand your options, and to experience the care you deserve.

For additional resources and information, please visit your local hospital or public health clinic. They will provide information about services that can help you experience a healthy, happy future. Remember, good health is in your power—and in your hands.

For more information, please visit our website at www.AAHInfo.org or call us at 240.777.4517.

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**Asian American
Health Initiative**



Together To Build A Healthy Community