



*Advocating..*

## **How to Advocate for Your Child at Medical Appointments**

Medical appointments can bring a lot of information and decisions in a short amount of time. Healthcare providers bring valuable knowledge and experience, and parents bring a deep understanding of their child's daily life and needs. When these perspectives work together, it creates the best support for a child.

Advocating for your child does not mean being confrontational, it means being informed, thoughtful, and engaged in your child's care.

### **1. Prepare Before the Appointment**

Preparing ahead of time can help you make the most of your visit. Before the appointment, consider writing down:

- Your observations, changes you've noticed in your child
- When those changes began
- Things that seem to help or worsen the concern

Updates to share:

- New medications or supplements
- Therapy updates
- Changes in sleep, eating, behavior, or development

Questions you would like answered

Examples:

- What could be causing this concern?
- Are there different approaches we could consider?
- What signs should we watch for at home?
- When would you recommend a follow-up visit?

## 2. Bring Important Information

Having important information organized can make appointments more productive.

Helpful items to bring:

- A notebook or medical binder
- Medication list with dosages
- Previous appointment notes
- Therapy or evaluation reports
- Insurance information

This helps healthcare providers quickly understand your child's history and progress.

## 3. Ask Questions and Seek Understanding

It's completely appropriate to ask questions during your child's appointment. Healthcare providers want families to understand the care plan and feel comfortable with the information being shared.

If something is unclear, you might say:

Examples of respectful questions

- "Could you help me understand that a little more?"
- "What are the benefits and risks of this option?"
- "Are there other approaches we should consider?"
- "What outcomes are you hoping to see with this recommendation?"
- "How will we know if this is helping?"
- "Is there anything we can do at home to support progress?"
- "Are there resources you recommend for parents to learn more?"

If you still have concerns

- "I appreciate your perspective. I'm still a little concerned about this and would like to understand it better."
- "Could we look at this from another angle?"
- "Would it be helpful to monitor this for a period of time?"

The goal is to keep the conversation open and collaborative so that decisions are made with both medical expertise and parental insight in mind.

## 4. Take Time to Process Information

Some recommendations may involve important decisions. It is okay to take time to think, gather information, and discuss options before moving forward. Parents may feel pressure to decide quickly, but thoughtful decisions often benefit from time and reflection.

Respectful ways to ask for time

- “This is a lot of information. I’d like some time to process it.”
- “Would it be okay if we reviewed this again at a follow-up appointment?”
- “Can we take a little time to think about this and discuss it as a family?”
- “Are there any risks if we monitor this for a short period before deciding?”
- “Could you explain what might happen if we wait and reassess later?”
- “Is there anything we should watch for while we consider our options?”

Taking time does not mean you are refusing care—it simply means you are making a thoughtful and informed decision for your child.

## 5. Take Notes During the Appointment

Appointments often include a lot of information.

Helpful things to write down:

- Recommendations or instructions
- Medication changes
- Tests or evaluations suggested
- Follow-up appointments

If possible, bringing another adult to listen or take notes can be very helpful.

## 6. Remember Your Role in Your Child’s Care

Healthcare providers bring medical expertise and experience.

Parents bring daily insight into their child’s personality, strengths, and needs.

Both perspectives are valuable.

Advocating for your child may include:

- asking thoughtful questions
- seeking clarification
- learning about options
- giving your child the time and opportunity to grow and develop

Taking time to understand decisions and allowing space for progress can be an important part of your child's journey.

## **7. When Your Parent Instinct Is Telling You Something**

Parents often notice small changes or patterns in their child that others may not see during a short appointment. These observations are valuable and can help guide care. If you feel something may need further attention, it is okay to respectfully share your concerns.

You might say:

- "I've noticed something that has been concerning me and would like to talk about it."
- "This change seems different from my child's usual behavior. Could we explore it further?"
- "I may be wrong, but my instinct is telling me something may be off. What do you think?"
- "Would it be reasonable to monitor this more closely or follow up if it continues?"

Healthcare providers rely on parent observations because families see their child in everyday situations that providers cannot. Sharing what you notice can help provide a more complete picture of your child's health and development.

If concerns remain, it is also reasonable to:

- schedule a follow-up appointment
- seek additional evaluation
- ask for a referral to a specialist
- ask questions until you feel comfortable with the plan

## **A Reminder for Parents Walking This Journey**

Every child's path is unique. Medical appointments, evaluations, and decisions can sometimes feel overwhelming, but you are not walking this journey alone.