

How to Advocate During a Doctor's Appointment



The following tips can help you to advocate for yourself or a loved one when meeting with a doctor about eating disorder concerns:

- **Arrive early** for the appointment so you have extra time to organize your thoughts and get out any printed materials you've brought. Breathe deeply and try to stay calm.
- **Inform the doctor** that you/your loved one may have an eating disorder. Be specific and let the doctor know about all eating disorder symptoms as well as any health concerns. You can share this checklist of symptoms with the doctor: <https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/EDSignsSymptomsChecklist.pdf>
- **Provide basic facts about eating disorders** to dispel common myths or share these flyers: <https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/shareable-resources/>. You can also share guidelines from the Academy for Eating Disorders and the American Psychiatric Association on the standards of care for eating disorders: <https://www.aedweb.org/resources/publications/medical-care-standards> <https://psychiatryonline.org/doi/book/10.1176/appi.books.9780890424865>
- **Make sure the doctor is aware of the recommended lab testing** for eating disorders and confirm which tests they will order. You can also share this list of recommended tests: <https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/MedicalTests.pdf>
- **Take notes during the appointment.** It can be helpful to have a record of what was said to refer back to during follow-up appointments and coordinating care with other providers.
- **Review your notes** and confirm the doctor's recommendations so you are both on the same page.
- **Address any myths head on.** Sometimes doctors are not well informed about eating disorders and unintentionally perpetuate harmful stereotypes or dismiss concerns outright due to their ignorance.
- **Call out diet culture and weight stigma.** Health care professionals can often make negative comments about someone's weight or react positively to weight loss, restrictive eating and dieting. These messages can increase risk for negative body image and disordered eating so it's important to speak up.
- **Ask follow up questions if you're confused.** It's also okay to disagree with the doctor and voice any concerns you have as calmly and logically as possible.
- **Get a second opinion.** If the doctor continues to dismiss your concerns or you don't agree with their treatment recommendations it may be time to find a new doctor.
- **Ask for referrals.** If you/your loved one is not seeing an eating disorder specialist, ask the doctor for a referral. To find eating disorder specialists in your area you can also search here: <https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/find-treatment/>
- **Debrief with a support person.** After the appointment, set up a time to talk privately with someone you trust about what happened and how you're feeling. This can be an overwhelming and confusing process and you deserve to have the support you need!