**Become a Proactive Partner in Your Health Care**

YOU are important. Your health and wellbeing are important. Here are some tips that will help you stop being a passive patient (recipient of care) and start being a proactive partner in your wellness journey.

Apply **critical thinking** skills to all things health-related. Critical thinking involves:

* Thinking on purpose or *with* a purpose
* Clear, rational, logical, independent thinking
* Mindful *communication*
* *Problem solving* without bias or egocentricity

Become a proactive participant by…

1. Understanding how your health insurance works
2. Find a good health care provider and/or healthcare facility
   * <https://www.codlrc.org/hs/doctor>
3. Be prepared to ask questions during your healthcare visits (come prepared!)
   * https://www.codlrc.org/hs/EmpoweredPatient
   * <https://www.ahrq.gov/patients-consumers/patient-involvement/ask-your-doctor/index.html>
   * A typical visit is 15 minutes—ask for an extended visit (30 minutes) to allow for discussion
4. If a medicine is prescribed, ask detailed questions about the medicine
   * name of the medicine, how it works, when and how long to take it, foods and drinks to avoid, side effects, ways to deal with any side effects, how to know if the medicine is working or not, possible drug interactions, cost of medication, covered by insurance, generic availability and/or efficacy of generics?
5. If a test or procedure is recommended, ask detailed questions about what will happen
   * Ask for a complete explanation of test or procedure. Ask why it is recommended (what it will measure or do), whether it will require a hospital stay (if so, how long), possible side effects, estimated length of recovery, what to expect after test/procedure, whether follow-up care is necessary, when test results will be available, what experience does a provider have with doing the procedure, how many of these procedures has the provider performed and what is the average success rate? Ask about alternative procedures/tests and the pros and cons of any recommended procedure/treatment.
6. Maintain your own health records and be prepared to share and discuss them with providers
7. Review your medical bills, question discrepancies and correct inaccuracies (simple coding errors can result not only in billing issues, but also in misdiagnosis and treatment)
8. Recognize when a second opinion is appropriate and don’t hesitate to get one
   * Prior to a non-emergency surgery or invasive procedure
   * When there is some confusion or question about the validity of a diagnosis
   * When patients feel that they are unable to communicate effectively and be “heard” by a provider
9. Critical thinking takes TIME. Don’t be afraid to take time, self reflect, discuss with family members, research, check with insurance, create questions and set up another consultation for discussion and decision making
   * Remember the importance of reviewing personal medical history, preferences and lifestyle and taking these into account with the help of a healthcare provider before committing to treatments or changes in lifestyle
   * Do not practice without a license!
10. Follow directions (Doctor’s orders including prescriptions, activity, diet and exercise recommendations)
11. Follow-up
    * Attend follow-up visits & contact providers with questions or if uncomfortable with medical advice given