

How to Get Care at Your Health Center



If you need health care, Health Centers are the solution. Health centers are places in your community where you and your family can go to receive primary health care services. These services may include:

- ♦ general check-ups to prevent illness
- ♦ health care to treat illnesses, like high blood pressure, diabetes and the flu
- ♦ care for your eyes
- ♦ care for your teeth
- ♦ care during pregnancy
- ♦ care for children, like vaccines and testing to find problems in their eyes, ears and teeth
- ♦ pharmacy services

It is very easy to get health services. Many health centers:

- ♦ stay open later on weekdays and are open on weekends
- ♦ take care of people who do not have health insurance, regardless of their residency or citizenship status
- ♦ provide services at a discount and offer payment plans
- ♦ offer transportation and interpretation services

The health care providers and other health center employees are very good. They have doctors, dentists, registered and specialist nurses, physician assistants and many other health specialists. They also have other professionals like pharmacists, health educators, community health workers and outreach workers.

In the following pages you will learn about the five steps to take to have a good visit to your local health center. The steps are:

1 MAKE an appointment

2 GET READY for your appointment

3 CHECK IN at the front desk

4 TALK to your health care provider

5 PAY for your visit

Five Steps to Have a Good Visit at a Health Center

1 MAKE an appointment

Tell the receptionist:

- Your name and your phone number
- Why you need to be seen by a health care provider
- Your health insurance information (if you have it)

Ask the receptionist:

- What you need to do to register as a patient
- How much the visit will cost



When visiting your health center, arrive on time. If you cannot make it to the appointment, call at least a day before and cancel it. If you don't, they may charge you a fee for not showing up, and it may be hard to get another appointment.

2 GET READY for your appointment

Bring all of these documents:

- Your health insurance card, if you have one.
- A driver's license, school or employment card, a passport, or any identification card with a photo to prove who you are.
- A rent contract, or a water, gas or electric bill with your name and address printed on it to prove where you live.
- Your most recent pay stub, W-2 form, Social Security pay stub, income tax return, or another document to prove how much your family makes in a year.
- Your medical records if you have them, or any document that has information about your current or past illnesses, health conditions, surgeries and other medical events.

Also bring:

- All your prescription medicines, home remedies, supplements, and vitamins you take.
- Your written notes about how you are feeling or why you are going to the appointment, such as your symptoms and when they started.
- Cash or credit card to pay for the visit.



3 CHECK IN at the front desk

Do the following:

- Register as a patient. Fill out a **Patient Registration Form**.
- Tell the receptionist if you are a farmworker, a veteran, homeless, or live in public housing so you can get special services and discounts that may be available.
 - You are a farmworker if you or anyone in your family has worked in agriculture within the last two years or for a longer time.
- If you do not have health insurance or your insurance does not cover all services, ask how to get a discount. You may have to fill out a **sliding fee scale application form**.
 - Use the documents that prove who you are, where you live, and how much money you make to fill out this form.
- If you do not have these documents, ask about a **self-declaration form**. With this form you can get a discount for this appointment, but you will have to bring in the documents later.
- Read and sign the consent forms to receive medical treatment and to keep your medical records private.
- Ask the receptionist for an **interpreter** if you need this help during the appointment.
- Some health centers may ask you to pay for the visit before you can see the doctor or another health care provider.



4 TALK to your health care provider

A nurse or another health care worker will call you in and:

- ask you the reason for your visit and what medicines you are taking
- check your blood pressure, weight and temperature
- let you know when the doctor or another health care provider will come in to see you



When the health care provider comes to talk to you, he or she will:

- ask about your symptoms
- examine you and ask you some more questions
- tell you what he or she thinks the health problem is

The health care provider may also:

- give you a paper with an order to get some tests or to see a specialist (this is called a **referral**)
- give you a prescription for a medicine and instructions on how to take it



REMEMBER ...

- Ask questions about your treatment. Make sure you understand it very well.
- Ask if you can get a generic medicine. These medicines are just as good as brand-name medicines.
- Ask if you can get any written material about your health condition so you can take it home and talk about it with your family.

Note: If you requested help from an interpreter and he or she is not there, make sure you ask again before the health care provider comes in.



5

Pay for your visit

Now you are ready to check out and pay for your visit.

If you cannot pay the whole fee on the day of your appointment, ask if the health center can give you a payment plan so that you can pay your fee later or break it up into smaller payments.

Before you leave, set up your next appointment at the front desk or at the checkout desk.

Important Things to Do After your Visit

Follow these final recommendations:

- Call the health center if you have any questions after your visit
- Follow the health care plan you agreed upon with your health care provider
- Get your blood and screening tests done if you got a referral
- Visit the specialist if you got a referral
- Share the health information you learned with your family
- Buy your medicines

To buy your medicines at a lower price buy them at your health center. If the health center does not have a pharmacy, then:

- **Get a discount card for medicines.** You can get this card for free or you may need to pay a small fee for it. Ask your pharmacist how to get one.
- **Compare the prices for your medicines.** You can call or ask in person at different pharmacies and grocery stores. Buy your medicines where they cost less.

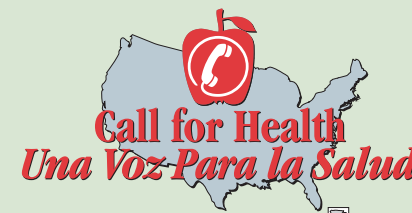
If you are moving away from your community or have to travel for work, it is very important to take with you:

- The name of your health center, phone number and address
- Copy of your medical records
- List of the medicines you take with or without prescriptions

To find the health center nearest to your new community, call the **Call for Health** program at 800-377-9968. It is free and they speak Spanish.

You can also visit the following website:

http://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/Search_HCC.aspx



1770 FM 967, Buda, TX 78610
(512) 312-2700 • 1-800-531-5120
www.ncfh.org

This publication was made possible by grant number U30CS09737 from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Bureau of Primary Health Care. The contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of HRSA.

Our thanks to those who reviewed this document.

Content Reviewers: Donald Allison, PhD, PA-C; Mirasol Bravo, MHP; Genoveva Martinez, MHP; Beverly Sirvent, B.S.Ag.E., Finger Lakes Community Health; Lois Wessel, RN, CFNP, Association of Clinicians for the Underserved (ACU) and Georgetown University School of Nursing and Health Studies. **Community Reviewers:** Bernardina González; Verónica Millán.