

# Maintaining a healthy relationship with your healthcare provider and medical scheme

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After waiting many weeks to see your doctor, you still leave their office - or virtual consultation - stressed out with many questions, or worse, you don't fully understand your diagnosis. If this happens to you more often than not, you are not alone.



Unfortunately, our healthcare system doesn't always do a great job serving its customers. Working through the maze of medical aid options, health insurance plans, co-payments, deductibles, in-network or out-of-network providers, and the often prohibitive cost of treatment may discourage some people from entirely making use of the services available. Some may even choose to suffer through an illness than make an effort to receive medical treatment, which may lead to chronic diseases and higher future costs due to emergency intervention.

But the key to combating these fears and challenges lies in trust. Maintaining a healthy relationship with your healthcare provider, built on trust, is the most fundamental factor that drives the choice of one provider over another.

## Why build trust?

While there are myriad reasons people are wary of the healthcare system from personal experience or friends or loved ones, it's up to that same system to combat that scepticism through transparency and open communication. Starting the conversation is the first step.

*“ The demographic groups often most impacted by a lack of regular, affordable access to healthcare range from disenfranchised to older adults, from marginalised ethnic groups to LGBTQIA+. Mistrust of the healthcare system is a long-standing issue among these groups and others. ”*

As more and more data pours into the healthcare system, the use of algorithms to inform decision-making will undoubtedly increase. Today, many algorithms are, in fact, biased. However, keeping these algorithms in check and ensuring that they

are unbiased is crucial to the future of healthcare and those who receive it.



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When people don't trust the healthcare system, their costs and risk may increase. Going years without regular, preventive healthcare treatments can cause chronic conditions to worsen over time. There are fewer opportunities to intervene and provide the necessary care. Connecting the healthcare system and patients in a positive, empathetic, respectful way may help lessen many groups' fatigue with the healthcare system and individual healthcare providers while improving health equity.

*“ Studies have shown that patients encouraged by their doctors to foster a relationship based on trust and open communication are more likely to adhere to medical plans, followthrough with check-ups, and embrace preventive health practices. ”*

To facilitate a healthy relationship with your doctor, you can start by being your own health manager and keeping a journal that has comprehensive charts and is easy to use. Every healthy relationship has to be built on trust, respect, and communication. Work hand-in-hand as partners with your doctor and your medical scheme to improve your health and live your life to the fullest.

**Here are some ways you can build trust with your doctor and your medical scheme:**

- 1. Choose a doctor you feel comfortable with:** It's essential to choose a doctor you feel comfortable talking to, who takes the time to listen to your concerns, and who is contracted to your medical scheme.
- 2. Ask questions:** Be bold and ask your doctor questions about your health, treatment options, and any concerns you may have. A good doctor will take the time to answer your questions and explain things in a way that you can understand. Also, make sure your doctor completes the necessary forms and codes required by your medical scheme to enable an easy claims process.
- 3. Be honest:** To receive the best care possible, it's essential, to be honest with your doctor and medical scheme about your symptoms, lifestyle habits, and medical history.
- 4. Follow their advice:** If your doctor recommends a treatment plan or medication, it's essential to follow their advice and take the steps necessary to improve your health.
- 5. Seek a second opinion:** If you have concerns about your doctor's diagnosis or treatment plan, it's okay to seek a second opinion. A good doctor will support you in seeking additional information and work with you to ensure you receive the best possible care.

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