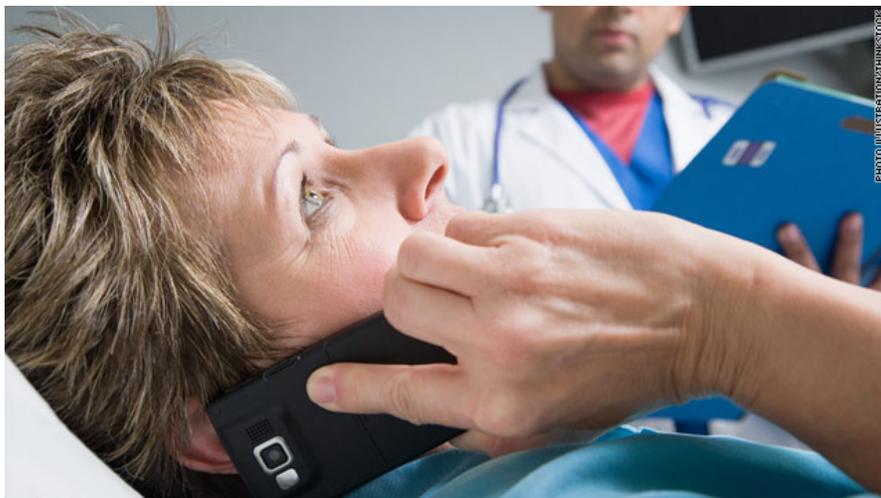


10 dumb things you do at the doc's office

By Elizabeth Cohen , CNN Senior Medical Correspondent
May 26, 2011 7:04 a.m. EDT

CNN.com



This is your health we're talking about. Other calls can wait. Turn the thing off.

(CNN) -- As much as she would like to, Dr. Lissa Rankin, a gynecologist, will never forget the woman who planned her wedding while lying naked on her examining table.

"Every 15 seconds, her cell phone was going off, and she was answering it!" Rankin recalls. "It was like, 'That's not the cake I ordered,' and, 'No, it's the other gown,' and I said to her, 'Is this a bad time? Should I come back later?'"

The bride may have been doing great things for her wedding, but she was sabotaging her own care -- and it was a really important visit, as she was newly pregnant.

Talking on your cell phone in the examining room, forgetting what medicines you take and lying to your doctor about your personal health habits are all ways of compromising your health.

"The doctor-patient relationship is like a business partnership," Rankin says. "We need to work together. Trust me to guide you but be willing to do your part."

From interviews with a gynecologist, a cardiologist, a rehabilitative medicine specialist, a fertility doctor and an internist, here are the Top 10 things patients do to mess up their own care.

1. You talk on your cell phone.

This is your health we're talking about. Other calls can wait. Turn the thing off.

2. You lie.

"I need to treat you the best way I can, so if you're gay, tell me. If you drink a bottle of tequila every night, I need to know. If you're having an affair and not using condoms, let me know," says Rankin, who blogs at ["Owning Pink."](#) "I promise I won't judge you."

3. You do a sloppy job describing your pain.

Is it stabbing or burning? Sudden or constant? Tingling or hot? The answers will help your doctor make the right diagnosis.

"You should describe the exact location, how intense the pain was, what provoked it and how long it lasted," says Dr. Nieca Goldberg, director of the New York University Women's Heart Program.

The week before your appointment, keep a diary of your pain and your other symptoms, too, advises Dr. Loren Fishman, a clinical professor of rehabilitative medicine at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons. He suggests using this time to also think about the questions you want to ask your doctor

and what you hope to get out of your appointment.

4. You don't state up front all the reasons for your visit.

If your ear hurts, your knee pops out when you run and you have a sty in your eye, state all three concerns at the beginning of the appointment so your doctor can plan your visit efficiently, advises Dr. Howard Beckman, an internist and clinical professor of medicine at the University of Rochester.

5. You don't state up front your expectations for your visit.

If you have certain hopes or expectations -- the doctor will pop that sty in your eye or prescribe antibiotics for your sore ear -- say so. The doctor can then explain if your expectations are realistic, and you'll be happier in the end.

"Sometimes patients are out of proportion to what the reality is, like the 44-year-old woman who hopes to get pregnant in one IVF cycle," says Dr. Jamie Grifo, program director of the New York University Fertility Center. "If they don't communicate patients' expectations, then I can't address them."

6. You don't know what medications you're taking.

"Patients should bring a list of medications they're actually taking, not what they believe they are supposed to be taking, or what they think I want them to take," Beckman advises.

If you take supplements, Rankin suggests you bring them in, since supplements aren't standardized like prescription drugs, and your doctor will want to see all the ingredients.

7. You leave with unspoken questions and concerns.

If a question's in your head, ask it, even if you think the doctor is rushed. If you're worried your headache might be a brain tumor, say it even if you think you sound like a hypochondriac.

8. You don't bring your medical records or images with you.

Yes, even in this day and age, many doctors rely on the fax machine to send medical records to and fro. Faxes goof up, so unless you absolutely, positively know your doctor has your records and images from another office, bring them with you, doctors advise.

9. You're too scared to disagree with your doctor.

If your doctor suggests you need an antidepressant and you don't want to take it, say so instead of nodding your head, taking the prescription and throwing it away the minute you're out the door. Or if she suggests a medication you can't afford, just say so.

"I know many of you are programmed not to question your doctor, but we can't read your mind, so we need you to communicate," Rankin says. "If the treatment plan I suggest doesn't resonate with the intuitive wisdom of your Inner Healer, please tell me, instead of ignoring what I suggest."

10. You don't comply with the treatment plan.

For doctors, this is the granddaddy of them all. If you've followed all the advice above, you should have a treatment plan that makes sense to you and one you're able to execute.

"Please follow through and do what you've agreed to do," Rankin says. "And if you don't, please tell me so I don't mistakenly assume the treatment failed. I won't jump all over you. I just need to know."

CNN's Sabriya Rice contributed to this story.



© 2014 Cable News Network. Turner Broadcasting System, Inc. All Rights Reserved.