

Medical History for the Present

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Medical providers understand that the patient will often diagnose themselves if the providers' medically educated ears listen carefully. You can help in the recognition of your problem by giving specific information.

At the doctor's office, you will be asked a series of questions. When did you first get the symptoms? Where in your body is the problem? How long have you had it? Does the pain or rash last all the time or come and go? Can you describe the pain? Is it burning, aching, sharp, dull, itchy or pinching? Does anything make you feel better? Does anything make you feel worse? Have you tried any treatments yourself? Are you having any other symptoms?

Frequently, a patient remembers something when asked the same question again, like the fall off that roof twenty years ago or the breathing problem after eating a certain food. You may remember a medicine, or a treatment or even a surgery that happened so long ago you no longer think about it anymore. If your appendix was removed when you were ten years old and now you have a bellyache, it would be a good idea to let your medical provider know, so that they can take "appendicitis" off their list of possible causes for your pain. The practitioners consider it all. Chronic problems such as high blood pressure, diabetes, or frequent urinary infections are all examples of things that your medical providers find it important to know when they are considering treatment for your new problem.

Many patients have thick charts and a large variety of medical problems that have been treated on the island or off it. Others have thin charts, possibly because they are new to our clinic, possibly because they have only been in Unalaska for a short time. Regardless of the size of your chart, it is always smarter and safer to know your own history and be able to relate the highlights of your history clearly. Know, and be able to report, the history of your loved ones, also.

It can be frustrating or tedious to have to try to remember all this information every time a medical provider asks you for it. However, this information is important for your medical provider to know in order to make a more accurate diagnosis and decide on an appropriate and effective treatment. Keeping a written list of the following information is an easy way to have this information readily available:

Allergies, including, but not limited to, drug allergies.

Medication names and doses.

Surgeries, serious accidents and hospitalizations – what happened and when.

Chronic illnesses or conditions.

This information is especially valuable in case of an emergency, which is precisely the time that you are least likely to be able to remember it all clearly. Remember, your medical history is valuable for your health today.