

Healthcare and Medical Gaslighting

Medical “Gaslighting” occurs when a healthcare professional downplays or blows off symptoms you know you are feeling and instead tries to convince you the symptoms are caused by something else—or that you are imagining the symptoms.

The work of a physician is not easy. They are often flooded with paperwork, insurance company demands, and extremely packed and overbooked schedules, all the while keeping up with the most recent research. All of these demands on the physician make it even more important that you have a good relationship with your physician and healthcare team.

Signs Your Doctor Isn't Listening to You

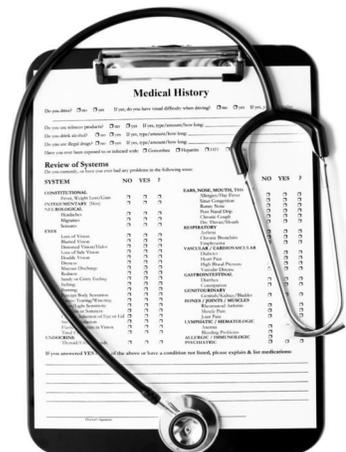
- **Your doctor constantly interrupts you.** If your doctor is constantly interrupting and not letting you report your concerns and symptoms, they may not be listening to you.
- **Asking closed-ended questions from a checklist.** If your doctor is more invested in following a checklist of questions that require one word answers.
- **Your doctor is distracted by electronic devices.** While your doctor may need to update electronic health records on a laptop or tablet while speaking with you, it is not appropriate to engage in text messages during your appointment.
- **The doctor acts rushed and is fidgeting.** Unfortunately, primary care doctors only have about 11-15 minutes per patient, but it is very important that concerns and symptoms are addressed during your appointment.



How do you get the care you need?

- **Find a provider you can bond with.** As a patient, you should be able to be honest and direct with your doctor. Also, your doctor should listen when you speak and not rush you through your appointment.
- **Advocate for yourself.** If you don't believe the first opinion given to you, get another opinion. Ask if there are diagnostic tests that can be done to either prove or disprove your symptoms.
- **Be prepared for your appointment.** Write down specific questions to ask during your appointment. Additionally, identify the most important questions you need answered.

- **Involve a friend or family member.** Bringing a friend or family member to your doctors appointment may help as they may be able to think of questions you haven't thought of.
- **Keep a list of your symptoms and treatments.** Writing a list of symptoms and treatments can assist your doctor in making a decision regarding treatments and diagnostic testing.
- **If you are having pain, make sure your doctor gets to the root of the problem.** Sometimes physicians can be focused on addressing the pain vs. discovering the underlying issue. If a physician writes you a prescription for pain medicine without giving you an explanation of what is causing the pain, feel free to ask questions about the source of the pain and any diagnostic testing.



It is important to have a supportive dialogue with your doctor. If you don't experience an ongoing, supportive dialogue with your doctor, you may be less interested in self-care and responsible health management. If you don't feel valued and respected, you are less likely to stay engaged in your own health efforts.