Getting a Loved One to the Doctor

When friends and family need a helping hand

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So many health conditions can be prevented or managed with early diagnosis. But fear, money or denial can make many reluctant to see the doctor. Try these tips.

Don’t push the river: Using force or guilt can lead to resentment. Instead, let your loved one know you are truly concerned about their welfare—they may seek medical help for your sake if not for their own. When Gabriele Bailey, a 45-year-old high school teacher in Los Angeles, was experiencing fatigue and other unusual symptoms, her friend Brenda Funches says, “I let her know that if she didn’t take care of herself, she wasn’t going to be able to take care of anyone else.” It worked.

Make yourself available: Offer to drive, accompany or wait for your loved one at the doctor’s office. Your very presence can alleviate some of the anxiety they may be experiencing. Offering to sit with children or make dinner can also free up time for them to deal with health concerns.

Help them find low-cost coverage: If your family member doesn’t have health insurance, help him or her find information about affordable care. A benefits counselor at a health clinic or hospital can help. “Brenda even found me a lawyer to sort through all the confusing legal stuff I had to deal with,” Bailey recalls. “Just taking these things off my plate helped give me the mental space to begin thinking about my own health.”

Sweeten the deal: Motivate or reward loved ones with an offer to treat them to dinner or a movie after their visit to the doctor’s office. After Bailey called her health provider and made an appointment for a thorough checkup, she and Funches celebrated at their favorite Vietnamese restaurant.

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