

Chapter 10

Me and My Accommodations



In this chapter, you can find information about:

1. The ADA
2. Accommodations
3. Making an accommodations request
4. What you do if you do not receive your accommodations
5. Stories of people requesting accommodations
6. Other types of accommodations
7. What did I learn?

1. The ADA

What is the ADA?

The ADA stands for the Americans with Disabilities Act. The ADA is a federal law that became effective in 1990.

The ADA helps protect people being discriminated against because of their disability.

The ADA is a federal law that helps people with disabilities participate more fully in their communities by helping remove barriers.

Barriers can exist at work, school, businesses, doctors' offices, parks and recreational facilities, restaurants, libraries, and other places.

Examples of barriers are:

- Stairs with no ramps
- Waiting areas with no space for a wheelchair
- Presentations or classes with no interpreters or captioning



Even though the ADA has been around since 1990, there are still many barriers people with disabilities face on a daily basis.

Barriers also exist when it comes to accessing health care.

That is why it is important to know your rights under the ADA and how to advocate for your rights.

2. Accommodations

We all have different needs.

Everyone has the right to health care no matter what their needs are. This means that everyone has the same right to receive the same type of medical care.

What is an accommodation?

An accommodation is a tool, service, or way of doing things that helps a person with a disability complete a task.

In order for a doctor to give equal access to care for patients with disabilities, the doctor may need to provide accommodations.

Under the law, your doctor is required to provide reasonable accommodations for you so you have equal access to care.

Examples of accommodations include:

- Qualified sign language interpreters
- Large print materials
- Enough space for wheelchairs to move around as needed
- Accessible weight scales and exam tables
- Longer appointments
- Written medical explanations and instructions

3. Making an Accommodation Request

When do I ask for an accommodation?

Ask for the accommodation when you make your appointment. Try to give your doctor as much time as you can so they can set up the accommodation for you.

If you are seeing a new doctor or wanting to make a new request with your current doctor, let them know about your needs when you make your appointment.

What do I say?

State your specific needs. Give examples of things that have worked for you before. You can also share accommodations that have not worked for you. Use your own words. You don't have to use legal words or medical terms.

How do I say it?

Ask for your accommodation(s) in a way that works for you.

- a. Call your doctor's office,
- b. Talk with them in person, or
- c. Write a letter or email.

What happens after I ask for an accommodation?

Your doctor should respond to your request without making you wait for a long time. If your doctor tells you they will have to get back to you about your request, ask them how long it will be. If you haven't heard from your doctor by the time they told you, contact them again.

Sometimes, a doctor will offer an accommodation that is different than what you asked for. You decide if what they offer you will work for you. If it is not going to work, you can tell your doctor the reasons why your specific accommodation is best for you.

When your doctor tells you they can provide you with your accommodation request, let them know you appreciate it and tell them thank you.

4. What to Do if You Do Not Receive Your Accommodation

If you are not given the accommodation you need or you feel you are being treated unfairly because of your disability, you can:

- Ask to speak with a Disability Access Coordinator, an ADA Coordinator, a Civil Rights liaison, or a patient advocate. Let them know what accommodations you need.
- Contact any of the following people for legal advice or to file a complaint: State's Protection and Advocacy System
 - acl.gov/programs/aging-and-disability-networks/state-protection-advocacy-systems
- The Office for Civil Rights at the US Department of Health and Human Services, 1-800-368-1019,
 - TD Number: 1-800-537-7697
hhs.gov/civil-rights/filing-a-complaint/index.html
- The Department of Justice, 800-514-0301, ada.gov

Oregon residents can also contact either or both of these groups:

- Disability Rights Oregon, 503-243-2081, droregon.org/
- Bureau of Labor and Industries, 971-673-0764, www.oregon.gov/boli/CRD

There are people to help support you with getting the accommodations you need. It is your right and you deserve the best health care available.



5. Stories of People Requesting Accommodations

The following five stories are examples of accommodations that people with different types of disabilities have requested so they could have a successful doctor's visit.



This is Omar.



This is Tanisha.



This is Sebastian.



This is Vu.



This is Kate.

Physical Accommodations

Omar had a successful appointment with his doctor today.

Omar wanted to find a new doctor whose office was accessible for him since he uses a wheelchair.

He called a doctor's office close to where he lives and asked some questions. He talked to them about his accommodation needs.

Omar advocated for what he needed. He asked the following questions:

- Is the building accessible? I need to make sure I can get into the building easily. I also need to get through the building and to the exam rooms.
- Is there an accessible exam table? If not, is there a hooyer lift or transfer team? A hooyer lift is a mechanical device designed to lift patients safely in a sling so they can be transferred from a chair to an exam table and then back. A transfer team are people trained to help transfer patients to an exam table.
- Is the bathroom accessible and ADA compliant?
- In the exam room is there enough room for me, my wheelchair, and a support person?



The doctor's office staff answered Omar's questions and told him that their clinic is accessible. Omar thanked them for their time and set up an appointment. Omar was able to have a successful appointment.

Communication Device Accommodations

Tanisha had a successful appointment with her nurse practitioner today.

Tanisha called her nurse practitioner's office to set up an appointment. She asked for a longer appointment because she uses a communication device and she knows she needs more time to communicate with her doctor.

She also asked them to email her the forms she will need for her appointment. This allowed Tanisha to take her time in filling out the forms.



Before her appointment, Tanisha met with her support person and programmed all her questions ahead of time in her communication device.

At the appointment, Tanisha made sure she was spoken to directly. She was also able to use her communication device to ask extra questions.

At the end of the appointment, Tanisha asked the nurse to email her the summary of her visit which included any medication changes. They also talked about any future appointments that she needs to set up.

Tanisha was able to advocate for her health care by getting a longer appointment which gave her enough time to effectively communicate with her doctor and get all of her questions answered.

Service Animal Accommodations

Vu had a successful appointment today with their physical therapist.

Vu is blind and has a dog guide, Rocket, to get from place to place.

Vu knows that the hospital does not allow pets, but they do allow service animals because the ADA law states that guide dogs and other service animals are not the same as pets.

The ADA gives Vu the right to bring Rocket into stores, hospitals, and the doctor's office.

When Vu shows up to the appointment, the desk staff can tell right away that Rocket is not a pet. They can tell Rocket is a guide dog helping Vu because of their disability.

Vu and Rocket approach the counter, wait in the lobby for their turn with the doctor, and travel together to the exam room.

Vu makes sure that Rocket behaves nicely by staying close (so no one trips on Rocket), and ensures Rocket does not make a mess in the hospital.



The physical therapist and staff know that they should not talk to, feed, pet, or play with Rocket because Rocket has an important job to do.

After the appointment Rocket helps Vu back out to the lobby, and outside to the bus stop.

With the help from Rocket and a good physical therapist who helped Vu with their care, Vu had a successful doctor visit.

ASL Interpreter Accommodations

Kate had a successful appointment with her eye doctor.

When Kate made her appointment with her eye doctor, she used the Telephone Relay Service.

While making her appointment, she requested a qualified sign language interpreter.

Kate requested a medically qualified interpreter because she knew her appointment was going to involve medical terms that she might not understand.



During the visit, Kate reminded her doctor to talk directly to her and not her interpreter.

She also asked that her office visit summary be written in plain language and emailed to her.

After the visit, Kate followed up with her doctor through email and was able to get the answers to a few more questions.

Low Sensory Accommodations

Sebastian had a successful appointment with his foot doctor.

Since Sebastian is on the autism spectrum, when he made his appointment he made sure to let the doctor's office know that he would like to be in an exam room that did not have bright lights or loud noises.

He also let them know that he will be bringing a support person.

Before his appointment, Sebastian worked with his support person and wrote down several questions he wanted to ask his doctor.

Sebastian practiced role-playing by asking his support person to pretend to be his doctor, so he could practice asking questions.



During the appointment, Sebastian reminded the doctor to speak directly to him and not his support person. He also asked his doctor to speak slowly and clearly to help him better understand.

Sebastian asked the doctor his prepared questions. He also asked his doctor to repeat the things he did not understand.

Sebastian had a successful appointment because he asked good questions and his support person was able to write down the answers for Sebastian.

6. Other Types of Accommodations

If you need more time, you may ask for:

- An extra long appointment or two appointments (together to make one appointment)
- Modified breaks or longer breaks
- A checklist to help you stay on task or schedule

If your communication style is more visual, you may ask for:

- Diagrams, models, pictures to communicate ideas
- Color coding use to identify specific documents

If you have other communication preferences, you may ask for:

- Telephone calls instead of emails
- Information provided in writing be in plain language
- Plain language to be used when people are explaining things to you
- Information in audio format instead of written format
- Emails instead of telephone calls
- Assistance with reading and writing to fill out forms

If you have sensory needs, you may ask for:

- An announcement by your medical professional letting you know that they are going to touch you
- White noise machines to reduce distractions
- Dimmable, natural, or full spectrum room lighting instead of fluorescent lighting
- Your support person to be with you at all times

7. What Did I Learn?

I can take charge of my health care when I:

- Know my rights under the ADA.
- Know what accommodations are best for me and how to ask for them.
- Know it is my right to tell my medical professional what I need for a successful visit.

Notes: _____

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