



Questions Are the Answer!

During Your Appointment

Advocate for your healthcare safety. Empower yourself to make the right medical decisions for you.

Make sure you get the best possible care by being an active member of your healthcare team. Being involved means arriving prepared and asking questions. To get the most from your visit, tell the nurse or person at the front desk that you have questions for your doctor. If your doctor does not ask you if you have questions, ask your doctor when the best time would be to ask them.

Maximize your time with your doctor and healthcare team by asking the questions you prepared before your appointment. Start by asking the ones that are most important to you.

Understand the Answers and Next Steps

It is important to ask questions but also to make sure you hear, and understand, the answers you get. Take notes. Or bring someone to your appointment to help you understand and remember what you heard. If you don't understand or are confused, ask your doctor to explain the answer again.

Understanding the plan or next steps that your doctor recommends is critical. Ask questions to clarify what your doctor wants you to do.

The questions you will ask depend on whether your doctor gives you a diagnosis, gives you a prescription for medicine, or recommends a treatment, medical test, or surgery.

Questions may include:

- What is my diagnosis?
- What are my treatment options? What are the benefits of each option? What are the side effects?
- Will I need a test and for what? Why do I need the test? What will the results tell me?
- What will the medicine you are prescribing do? How do I take it? Are there any side effects?
- Why do I need surgery? Are there other ways to treat my condition? How often do you perform this surgery?
- Do I need to change my daily routine?

Find out what you are to do next. Ask for written instructions, brochures, videos, or websites that may help you learn more.

Did You Know?

Medical schools teach medical students how to talk with patients because the schools know how important doctor-patient communication is for good care.



Other Helpful Tips

These steps will also help during your appointment:

- Ask someone to go to your appointment with you to help you understand and remember answers to your questions.
- Create a health history that includes your current conditions and past surgeries or illnesses. Bring it to your appointment.
- Know your family's health history, such as your parents' medical conditions.
- Bring all your medicines with you.