

Questions to Ask Your Doctor



ESTABLISHED 1948



General Office Visit Info:

- What are your doctor's office hours?
- Does the doctor work out of more than one office?
- What is the best time to call?
- What is the doctor's policy for returning calls?
- Who should you speak with if the doctor isn't available?
- What is the phone number for emergency calls or after-hours calls?
- What do you need to know about my past medical history or family history?
- How soon should a follow-up appointment be made?
- Are there any specific instructions regarding diet changes, medication changes, activity changes that the patient needs to make?
- If referral(s) to specialist(s) needed; find out if they are in or out of network, and if a referral needs to be made by the PCP.

Medical Conditions:

- What is causing my health problem?
- Is there more than one condition (disease) that could be causing my problem?
- What are my risk factors for this condition?
- How will this problem affect me in the future?
- Where can I get more information about my condition?
- What is the likely course of this condition?
- What is the long-term outlook with and without treatment?
- If my symptoms worsen, what should I do on my own? When should I contact you?
- How will my disease progress?
- Where can I find more information about my condition?
- Does the physician have any handouts regarding specific conditions?

Procedures:

- What is the purpose of the procedure?
- Do I have choices other than this procedure?
- Is the procedure necessary? Why?
- Where will the procedure take place?
- Who will do the procedure?
- How is the procedure done? (The patient will need to find out if the physician & facility doing the procedure are in or out of network.)
- Is there any preparation for the procedure?
- Does the patient need to have someone go with them?
- Will the physician's office make the arrangements for the procedure, or does the patient?
- Can the procedure wait until the patient finds out about coverage, necessary precertification, etc. from the insurance company?
- What are the alternatives if the procedure is not covered?
- Will there be other procedures after this one?
- After surgery, how long will I need to rest at home?
- Before surgery, do I need to stop taking my medications?
- How good are the tests for diagnosing the problem and the conditions?
- How safe are the tests or procedures?
- How long is the recovery period?
- What sort of care will I need at home after the procedure?
- How much improvement can I expect from this surgery or procedure?
- What complications can arise after the procedure? What are the signs of complications?
- How long does the procedure last?
- How painful is the procedure? What can you do to make it less painful? Will I need pain medications?
- What activities should I avoid after the procedure?
- Should I seek a second opinion?

Labs:

- What is the reason for the test?
- Is the test necessary?
- Does the test require fasting? If so, how many hours?

- What will the follow-up be depending on the outcome of the test?
- Are there specific foods or beverages that should be avoided prior to the test? If so, for how long?
- Where will the test be done? Need to find out if the lab is approved by the insurance company. (in-network or out-of-network)
- How often should I have these tests?
- When and how will I get the test results?

Medication/Pharmacy:

- What is the reason for the medication?
- Is it on-going?
- How often and when should it be taken? (with meals?, on an empty stomach?, at bedtime?, foods or beverages that should be avoided while taking the medication, etc.)
- What are the side effects?
- Are there any drug interactions with other medications that are currently being taken?
- What is the expected outcome and how soon will the outcome be evident?
- Is there a generic form? Can I take the generic?
- Is there another medication I can take if my insurance doesn't cover this one, or it's too expensive?
- If mail order and medication needs to be taken immediately, can the physician write a prescription for 30 days to be filled at the pharmacy and also for 90 days to be mailed in? or Can the physician give some samples in the interim prior to getting the prescription filled to see: (1) if it works, (2) if side effects are a problem
- Are there other options that can be tried instead of the medication such as diet, exercise, etc.?
- Is there any way I can combine or reduce the number of medications I am taking?
- What will happen if I don't take the medication?
- How will I know if the medication is working?
- How will this medication affect me in the future?
- Is my medication sensitive to light, heat, moisture or cold? How should I store it? How long can I keep it?
- Does this medication contain anything that can cause an allergic reaction?
- What are the signs of an allergic reaction?
- What should I do if I have an allergic reaction?
- What if I forget to take my medication or take a dose incorrectly?
- Can I take non-prescription drugs or herbal medicines?
- Is it safe to become pregnant or breast-feed while taking this medication?
- How should I dispose of needles, syringes, or unused medications?
- Where can I get more information about this medication?
- How can I remember to take my medication?
- If I start to feel better, can I stop the medication, or take less than what the doctor prescribed?
- If I start to experience side effects what should I do?
- Can I crush the tablet and mix it with food or with a beverage?
- Is it okay to split my tablets?
- If I need to take this medication every so many hours, should I get up in the middle of the night to take it?
- What happens if I take too much of my medication?
- What symptoms suggest the dosage should be changed or the medication stopped?
- When it's time to go off the medication, does the dosage need to be 'tapered'?
- What will happen if I just stop taking my medication?

Specialty Care:

- Should I see a specialist?
- Does this specialist work out of more than one office?
- Can you recommend a specialist? Is he or she board certified?
- How soon should I be seen by this specialist?
- What if I can't get an appointment for a month or more? Should I try to see someone else?
- What should I do if my condition changes before seeing the specialist?

Support:

- Is there a social worker that I can talk to?
- Where can I find information on coping with my condition?
- Where can I find emotional, psychological, and spiritual support?
- Where can I find financial support?
- How can I best minimize the psychological impact of this disease on my family and myself?



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