

Key subjects for the patient to consider

1. You, the patient, are the most important source of communication with doctors.
2. Before your visit, take the time to get your medical facts in order so that you can explain what you know to the doctor. This should include:
 - a. any medications that you take and their dosages
 - b. any other doctors that you have recently seen
 - c. their addresses and phone numbers
 - d. the reasons why you went to see them.
 - e. Your pharmacy phone number
3. It is important that you listen closely to your doctor and understand what he or she is explaining to you. If you have trouble understanding the medical terminology, see if a family member can go with you to assist you in understanding or to take notes for you.
4. If the doctor does not communicate the results of your test(s) to you, do not assume that no news is good news. Call and ask the office for your results.
5. Learn as much as you can about your condition. Ask your doctor or nurse to explain it to you and make sure you use reliable sources for all information that you seek. (see resource links)

What you should tell your doctor when you visit

1. Previous hospitalizations and for what reason.
2. List of all medications you are taking, their dosages, and when you last took them.
3. Last time you saw a physician and for what reason.
4. Names and phone numbers of any specialists you have seen.
5. Health habits, which may include smoking, alcohol, and/or drug use, exercise, bladder control, and memory.
6. Any type of problems or changes in your health status.
7. Your family health history.

8. Any supplements that you may be taking and when you last took them.

Questions you might ask relating to illness or symptom(s)

1. What's wrong with me?
2. Can you draw a picture or show me what is wrong?
3. What causes this kind of problem?
4. Can I give this illness to someone else, and if so, how and for what period of time can I pass this on?
5. Are there any activities or foods which I should avoid?
6. When can I return to work or school?
7. What is the long-term prognosis of my condition?
8. How can I prevent this from happening again?
9. How will this problem affect me in the future?
10. What will happen if I don't treat my condition right away?
11. What treatment should I follow, including dietary, medical treatment, and lifestyle changes?
12. When do I need to see the doctor again?
13. Where can I get more information my condition?

Questions you might ask about medications that are prescribed to you

1. What is the name of the medication?
2. Why do I need this particular medication?
3. How and when should I take this medication?
4. How long should I take the medication?
5. What are the possible side effects of this medication?

6. Is this medication safe to take with other medications I am taking?
7. What do I do if side effects occur?
8. How often will I need to get the medication refilled?
9. How will I know if the medication is working?
10. What are the risks of not taking the medication?
11. Is this a brand name or generic name?
12. Are there less expensive medications for my condition?

Questions you might ask about surgery or a procedure

1. When do I check in and where?
2. What can I expect to happen before the surgery or procedure?
3. How long will the procedure take?
4. Can my family go with me?
5. What effects will the procedure have on me in the short and long term?
6. What is the doctor's experience in performing the procedure?
7. What medications will be given to me?
8. How long will I have to rest at home after the procedure?

Questions you might ask about diagnostic tests

1. Why is this test necessary?
2. What will happen if I do not have the test?
3. Are there any risks involved?
4. Will it hurt? If so is there anything I can do to lessen the pain?

5. Can the doctor perform the test in the office or will I have to go to the hospital or the laboratory?
6. Is there any preparation for the test?
7. What are the side effects of the test?
8. What changes or effects should I report to the doctor?
9. Who will call me with the results of this test?
10. How long will it take for me to get the results?