

What Questions Should You Ask Your Doctor?

The heart of a good relationship with your doctor is being able to talk comfortably and understand one another. Always remember that you're a partner in your care. You have a right to clear information from your doctor about your condition and proposed treatment.

Make sure you print out or write down your questions and take them with you when you visit your doctor. Some people find it helpful to bring a friend or family member who will be able to write down answers. Please note that you may not be able to address all of these questions in your initial session with your doctor - depending on how much detail you and your doctor wish to discuss, it might be necessary for you to schedule a separate appointment to review your questions.

If you have doubts about the doctor's diagnosis or treatment plan, speak up. There may be other treatments that will work as well. You can always ask your doctor to consult with a specialist - or you can get a second opinion on your own.

- If you have more than one health issue, talk about the one of most concern to you first.
- If you're taking any medicines now - including herbal supplements, vitamins, or over-the-counter drugs - be sure to let your doctor know what they are or bring the original bottles or packages with you. Your doctor needs to know about everything you are taking, not just prescription medicines.

If you only have a limited amount of time, the following is a shorter list of questions that you should be able to address during a standard doctor visit.

1. What are ALL my treatment options?
2. What treatment are you recommending? Why? What are the risks?
3. If your doctor is recommending medication:
 - How will you evaluate how well the medication is working, and determine if a different drug, or different amount or form would be better?
 - How often should I return for a checkup?
 - How long will I need to continue taking this medication? If I am supposed to only take it for a short while, how will I know if I need to start again? Will I stop taking it all at once, or will I gradually reduce my use of it?
4. If your doctor is recommending surgery:
 - Studies have shown that, for some conditions, the more procedures a doctor performs, the better the outcome. How long have you been doing this procedure and how many have you performed?
 - What are the potential complications, in your experience? What can I do to minimize any complications?
 - Will I need help at home? For how long? When will I be able to drive? When will I be able to return to work full-time? How about part-time? Perform other daily activities?

Complete List of Questions to Ask Your Doctor

1. How severe is my condition?
2. What are ALL my treatment options?
3. What treatment are you recommending? Why?
4. Is it important that treatment start immediately?
5. What are the risks of this treatment?
6. If I have additional questions once I get home, whom should I call to get my questions answered?
7. What community resources do you recommend?

If Your Doctor is Recommending Medication:

1. How quickly will I start to feel better after starting treatment?
2. How will you evaluate how well the medication is working, and determine if a different drug, or different amount or form would be better?
3. If the medication I start on doesn't work, what will be the next step or option?
4. What side effects should I expect? How will I know when I should call about any side effects that I experience?
5. How often should I return for a checkup?
6. I am also taking other drugs (be sure to include over-the-counter and herbal medications). Do any of these drugs interfere with what you are prescribing?
7. Are there any foods that may interfere with this medication?
8. Will I take this medication "as needed" or on a scheduled basis?
9. How long will I need to continue taking this medication? If I am supposed to only take it for a short while, how will I know if I need to start again? Will I stop taking it all at once, or will I gradually reduce my use of it?
10. Is there a limit to how long I can take the medication before it becomes dangerous or loses its effectiveness?
11. (If you have prescription drug coverage) If I can save money by purchasing a generic version of this drug, do you recommend that I do that? If not, is there a different generic drug that you recommend, or is the branded version the best option for me?
12. (If you are pregnant or nursing) Is it safe to take this medication if I am pregnant? If I am nursing?

If Your Doctor is Recommending Surgery:

1. Studies have shown that, for some conditions, the more procedures a doctor performs, the better the outcome. How long have you been doing this procedure and how many have you performed?
2. Studies have shown that, for some conditions, the more procedures a hospital performs a year, the better the outcome. How many does this hospital perform a year? How many years has this hospital been performing this procedure? If you do not know, how can I find out?
3. Will you be performing the procedure yourself? Will you have the assistance of other doctors? Will there be any students involved?
4. What are the potential complications, in your experience? What can I do to minimize any complications?
5. What percentage of the time do these complications occur, in your experience?
6. Will this be general or local anesthetic? Can I have a choice? What side effects can I expect from the anesthesia?
7. What can I expect regarding pain and pain management during and after the procedure? How is post-operative pain management going to be handled (for example, pump vs. injections vs. oral medications)? How long after the procedure does the pain generally subside?
8. Would you recommend that I or a member of my family bank blood ahead of time?
9. What will be my schedule of physical activity while in the hospital?
10. What is expected in terms of therapy or rehabilitation after I am released from the hospital?
11. Will I need help at home? For how long? When will I be able to drive?
12. When will I be able to return to work full-time? How about part-time? Perform other daily activities?
13. After surgery, will you be managing my condition on an ongoing basis?

Last Reviewed: March 2014

[Source](#)