

COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR DOCTOR

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”
- George Bernard Shaw

Effective communication is important in our personal lives, and it is equally vital in our relationships with health care providers. It is important to share information with your doctor so he/she can properly diagnose you. Doctors report that 70 percent of their correct diagnoses are the result of information provided by the patient. So speak up, share information (even if you don't think it is essential), ask questions, and participate in the treatment process to have better care and a healthier lifestyle.

You might also want to write down what the doctor says or even take a friend or family member to help you “hear” and recall what the doctor has said.

Here are some sample questions to ask your doctor.

About My Disease or Disorder:

What is my diagnosis?
What caused my condition?
Can my condition be treated?
How will this condition affect my (vision or other condition) now and in the future?
Should I watch for any particular symptoms and notify you if they occur?
Should I make any lifestyle changes?

About My Treatment:

What is the treatment for my condition?
When will the treatment start, and how long will it last?
What are the benefits of this treatment, and how successful is it?
What are the risks and side effects associated with this treatment?
Are there foods, drugs, or activities I should avoid while I'm on this treatment?
If my treatment includes taking a medication, what should I do if I miss a dose?
Are other treatments available?

About My Tests:

What kinds of tests will I have?
What do you expect of find out from these tests?
When will I know the results?
Do I have to do anything special to prepare for any of the tests?
Do these tests have any side effects or risks?

Will I need more tests later?

About High Blood Pressure

What should my blood pressure be?
What are my options in controlling high blood pressure?
How often should my blood pressure be checked?
What about home blood pressure monitors?
Should I use blood pressure machines at stores?
How does exercise affect my blood pressure?
What's my daily sodium (or salt) limit?
Is there sodium in the medicine I take?
Will I need to take blood pressure medicine?
Will I always have to take medicine?
Why do I need to lose weight?

About Blood Cholesterol

What do my cholesterol numbers mean?
What is my goal cholesterol level?
How often should I have my levels checked?
How does exercise affect my cholesterol levels?
What type of foods should I eat?
Will I need cholesterol-lowering medicine?
How long will it take to reach my cholesterol goals?

About Weight Control

Why are weight control and physical activity important?
How often should I check my weight?
How much weight should I lose?
How fast should I lose weight?
What diet guidelines should I follow?
What are the best types of physical activities for me?
How much physical activity do I need to do?
How much weight gain is too much?
How can family and friends help?
How do I find a dietitian to help me develop a good, long-term weight-loss plan?

Questions adapted from the American Heart Association <http://www.americanheart.org>.