



American
Heart
Association.



A Comprehensive Guide for
Your Health

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If communicating with your healthcare provider is difficult, we've got some tips to help you get the answers you need.

Hint: The silent treatment is never an effective cure.

The best way to make sure you're following your healthcare team's advice and taking your medication correctly is to use simple, direct communication. Ask a lot of questions. If you don't understand an answer, keep asking until you do understand. Medical terms can be tough to figure out, and sometimes more explanation is needed.

Important Things to Remember

Before, During and After Your Doctors Visits

- ✓ Bring a list of all your medicines, including over-the-counter medicines, dietary supplements, vitamins and herbs.
- ✓ Ask for a copy of test results or reports about procedures (such as ECG).
- ✓ If you don't understand something, ask the doctor to explain.
- ✓ Repeat the doctor's instructions using your own words.
- ✓ At the end of the visit, review what you and the doctor agreed upon.

PACE Guide Sheet

To Help You Prepare for Your Doctors Visits

Researchers at Ohio State University developed the PACE Guide Sheet to give you an easy way to organize your feelings, questions and concerns before your visit. PACE stands for:

- **P = Provide** information about how you feel.
- **A = Ask** questions if you don't have enough information.
- **C = Clarify** what you hear.
- **E = Express** any concerns you may have.

Here's how to use the PACE sheet:

- A day or two before your appointment, answer the questions on the sheet. If you're not having problems or concerns, leave blank spaces on the form.
- Show the sheet to your health care provider at the start of the visit. During the visit, use the sheet to remember what you wanted to discuss.

REASON(S) FOR THE APPOINTMENT:

DESCRIBE YOUR SYMPTOMS AND CONCERNS:

WHAT YOU HOPE CAN BE DONE TO HELP YOU:

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR CONDITION:

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR TESTS OR PROCEDURES:

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR MEDICINES:

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR TREATMENTS:

My Medicine List

Instructions:

- Write down all the medicines you take, including over-the-counter medicines, vitamins and herbs. Update your list as your medicines change.
- Example: Name of medicine = aspirin, Color = white, What is it for = blood thinner, Dose and number = 81 mg.-1 pill, Time = night, Special instructions = none
- If you are allergic to a medicine, or if you have had problems taking a medicine, write it at the bottom of the page.

LIST OF MEDICINES					
Name of medicine	Color	What it's for	Dose and number of pills or tablets to take	Time	Special Instructions (such as "take with food")

Questions about Heart Disease & Stroke

- ✓ What are my risk factors for heart disease?
- ✓ Am I at risk for stroke?
- ✓ What are the warning signs of heart disease and stroke?
- ✓ Do I need to lose or gain weight for my health?
- ✓ What is a healthful eating plan for me?
- ✓ What kind of physical activity is right for me?
- ✓ What is my blood pressure, and is it at a healthy level?
- ✓ What is my blood cholesterol, and is it at a healthy level?
- ✓ What can I do to lower my risk of heart disease and stroke?
(If you smoke, ask for help quitting.)
- ✓ If you're a woman, ask, "What should I know about the effects of menopause on my health?"

Recommended Screenings

What to test and how often

RECOMMENDED SCREENINGS	HOW OFTEN?
Blood pressure	Each regular health care visit or at least once per year if blood pressure is less than 120/80 mm Hg
Cholesterol ("fasting lipoprotein profile" to measure total, HDL and LDL cholesterol)	Every 4-6 years for normal-risk adults; more often if any you have elevated risk for heart disease and stroke
Weight / Body Mass Index (BMI)	During your regular health care visit
Waist circumference	As needed to help evaluate cardiovascular risk if your BMI is greater than or equal to 25 kg/m ² .
Blood glucose test	At least every 3 years*
Discuss smoking, physical activity, diet	Each regular health care visit

*The American Diabetes Association recommends testing for prediabetes and risk for future diabetes for all people beginning at age 45 years. If tests are normal, it is reasonable to repeat testing at a minimum of 3-year intervals.

Heart Failure

Partnering in Your Treatment

Bring this sheet with you to your appointment and discuss the following with your doctor.

UNDERSTAND YOUR HF

✓ How serious is my heart failure?

Mild Moderate Severe

✓ In what ways does having heart failure increase my health risks?

✓ How likely is it that having HF will worsen the effects of other conditions I may have?

✓ Would any of the following lifestyle changes help me to better manage the progress of HF?

Managing weight
 Quitting smoking
 Making other important changes

IDENTIFY YOUR HF NEEDS

✓ Am I a candidate for HF cardiac rehab?

Yes No

✓ Are there any additional tests we need to do to learn more about my heart function? If so, which ones?

EXPLORE HF TREATMENT

✓ What are the most important things I can do to manage my HF?

✓ What should I expect in the coming weeks, months or years?

✓ Are there any activities that are off limits for me at this time? (List specific concerns you may have, such as exercise, sex, housework.)

✓ What treatment options should I be thinking about for managing my HF?

SYMPTOMS OF HF

✓ Should I be tracking and reporting my symptoms to you?

Yes (instructions below) No

✓ What symptoms or problems would you want me to notify you about?

MEDICATION QUESTIONS

✓ Will I be taking a medication(s) for HF?

Yes No

✓ What should the medication(s) do?

✓ What will happen if I don't take the prescribed medication(s)?

WHAT ARE MY TREATMENT GOALS AT THIS TIME?

Lower Your Blood Pressure

Make the Most of Your Appointment with a Health Care Professional

GETTING READY

✓ How often do you check your blood pressure?

- Every day
- About once a week
- About once a month
- Rarely
- Never

✓ If you measure your blood pressure, do you keep a log?

- Yes
- No

✓ Are you taking your medications as prescribed?

- Yes
- Usually
- Sometimes
- No

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

✓ To get less salt in my diet, I'd like to (choose all that apply):

- Buy low sodium foods
- Taste before adding salt
- Use salt-free spices/herbs
- Check labels for sodium
- Cook at home more often

✓ It's hard for me to manage my blood pressure because (choose all that apply):

- I don't like the way the medication makes me feel
- I'm having trouble getting my medication
- I'm having trouble changing my diet
- I can't easily exercise
- It's expensive
- I'm stressed/I don't feel well
- I forget what I need to do

✓ During my appointment, I'd like to discuss (choose all that apply):

- My medications
- Checking my blood pressure at home
- Reducing salt in my diet
- Getting more exercise
- Managing my weight
- Quitting smoking

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

✓ During your appointment, refer to this guide and have ready:

- A complete list of all your medications (including over the counter, vitamins and herbal supplements)
- A pen and paper to take notes

✓ Today my BP is:

- Normal
- Elevated
- Stage 1
- Stage 2

✓ Notes:

✓ My next appointment is on:

@ _____

Cardiac Rehab Questions

For Your Health Care Professional

The American Heart Association encourages you to actively discuss all aspects of your treatment regimen — including diet changes, exercise and medicines — with your health care team. Doctors, nurses and pharmacists can help you avoid problems associated with taking too little or too much of your medication. They can also help you avoid dangerous interactions or side effects between other medications or foods in your diet. Ask your local hospitals if they participate in Get With The Guidelines, or if they are certified as a Primary Stroke Center* by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations.

Your health care professionals will keep working with you to adjust your treatment plan if you have serious side effects. Below you'll find questions to ask your health care team to help you take an active part in your heart and stroke health. Print out these questions and take them to your next doctor's appointment.

Medication

Taking medications isn't as simple as swallowing a pill. Medicines can only help if you take them as prescribed. Take part in decisions regarding your treatment, follow the treatment plan you and your doctor agree on, watch for problems and become actively involved in solving them with your health care team. By following these guidelines, you can help reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke and achieve the fullest benefits from your treatment plan. Review the following questions with your health care team and take an active role in your health.

- ✓ What is the name of the medicine?
- ✓ Is this the brand or generic name?
- ✓ What is the medicine supposed to do?
- ✓ How and when do I take it, and for how long?
- ✓ What foods, drinks, other medicines or activities should I avoid while taking this medicine?
- ✓ Is there any written information available about the medicine?
- ✓ What happens if I miss a dose of my medicine?
- ✓ How often will I have to get the medication refilled?
- ✓ How will I know that my medication is working?
- ✓ What are the risks of taking this medication?
- ✓ What are the risks of NOT taking this medication?
- ✓ Are there less expensive medications for my condition?

Diet

Learn to read food labels so you can tell how much fat, sodium and other ingredients are in your diet. If your doctor tells you to “watch your diet” or make dietary changes, ask for specifics. Questions you can ask are:

- ✓ What kinds of foods should I eat?
- ✓ What kinds of foods should I avoid?
- ✓ Should I restrict my calories or fat intake to a certain level?
- ✓ What are some cooking tips that I should follow?
- ✓ What do I need to know about eating out?
- ✓ What can I eat at fast-food restaurants?
- ✓ Do I need to see a nutritionist or dietitian? If so, can you recommend one?
- ✓ Should I keep a diary of what I eat?
- ✓ Are there any groups in the community that can help me with my nutrition goals?
- ✓ How do I read food labels?
- ✓ How can I control the portions? How much salt may I eat?

Losing Weight

The benefits of maintaining a healthy weight go far beyond improved energy and smaller clothing sizes. By losing weight or maintaining a healthy weight, you are also likely to enjoy a higher quality-of-life too. If your doctor suggests you lose weight for your health, here are some questions you can ask:

- ✓ Why are weight control and regular physical activity important?
- ✓ How much weight should I lose, and how fast? What is a realistic weight goal for me?
- ✓ How often should I check my weight?
- ✓ What should my daily calorie, fat and cholesterol intake be?
- ✓ Are prescription diet pills appropriate for me?
- ✓ Do I have to exercise to lose weight? If so, what kinds of activities do you recommend?
- ✓ Once I lose the weight, how do I keep it off?
- ✓ What diet guidelines should I follow?
- ✓ What are the best types of 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?

Cholesterol

- ✓ What do my cholesterol numbers mean?
- ✓ How often should I have my levels checked?
- ✓ How does physical activity affect my levels?
- ✓ What type of diet should I eat?
- ✓ Will I need cholesterol-lowering medicine?
- ✓ How long will it take to reach my cholesterol goals?

High Blood Pressure

- ✓ What should my blood pressure be?
- ✓ How often should my blood pressure be checked?
- ✓ What about home blood pressure monitors?
- ✓ Should I use blood pressure machines at stores?
- ✓ How does physical activity affect my blood pressure?
- ✓ What's my daily sodium (or salt) limit?
- ✓ Will I need to take blood pressure medicine?
- ✓ Will I always have to take medicine?
- ✓ Why do I need to lose weight?

Physical Activity

- ✓ Why is regular physical activity important?
- ✓ Can I exercise?
- ✓ Can I play sports?
- ✓ What are the best types of activities for me?
- ✓ How much activity do I need?
- ✓ Can I have sex?