

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF YOUR DOCTOR'S VISIT

By Sierra Farris, PAC

Booth Gardner Parkinson's Care Center

Evergreen Hospital Medical Center, Kirkland WA

This handout includes information proven to be very useful and beneficial to the patients and caregivers before, during and after their doctor visit. Follow these instructions to help you get the most out of your medical care.

1. Prior to your visit:

Goal: BE PREPARED



A. Write Down Questions – questions commonly arise between visits. Writing them down in a notebook specifically for your doctor visit helps you to remember to ask your doctor. Allowing space to write answers will enable you to look back at a later time to refresh your memory. Caregiver questions can also be recorded and addressed during your office visit with your doctor.

B. Keep a record – of changes that occur between visits. Examples of things that may change include:

- Medications-name, strength and timing
 - Keep a running list of all medicines previously tried and the reason for discontinuation.
 - Health problems other than Parkinson's or other movement disorders
 - Living or caregivers arrangements.
 - Ambulation with an assisted device
 - Falls, when, where and how.
 - Keep track of medication refill needs.
 - Obtain records and addresses from other doctor visits.
 - Keep a pertinent diary of symptoms: Freezing/Dyskinesia/Fatigue/Sleep.
 - Medication timing.
 - Hallucinations, confusion or memory changes.
- A.** Note changes that result from calls to your doctor.



2. At Your Doctor's Visit:

Goals: Be Heard, Be Educated, Optimize Your Time

A. Arrive at your visit at least 15 minutes to complete the Returning Patient Form.

- Saves time for you and your doctor to spend talking instead of writing.
- Accurate information exchange for both you and your doctor.
- Another form of communication between you and your doctor.
- The information becomes part of your permanent medical record.
- A Returning Patient Form will be sent home with you to fill out just prior to your next visit.
- Take notes or come with a caregiver or both. Caregivers can also take notes.
- Ask your questions early during the office visit; don't wait until the end of the visit.

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Saving time with your doctor equals more time to listen and answer your concerns.

For example, your medication may have been changed between visits over the phone. Writing down your current dosing and the time you take your medicine accurately saves time.



Your doctor can review your list of medications much quicker than asking and then writing them down. Also, if you are unsure how you are taking your medications or taking them as needed at different times every day, managing your Parkinson's symptoms can be difficult. Your doctor may mention to you, "It's like trying to hit a moving target."

Enhance Management of your Parkinson's disease. Many providers have a patient questionnaire or returning patient form that provides your doctor with current information about other medical conditions that may influence the care of your Parkinson's disease. The questionnaire becomes part of your permanent medical record.

In addition to accurately reporting information and having more time to spend on the most important issues, the returning patient form provides you with another means of communicating with your doctor. Often enough, patients remember at the end of their visit something very concerning that must be saved for discussion at the next visit. Prioritizing your concerns ensures your most pressing issues are addressed.

If you find reporting symptoms is difficult or your symptoms are becoming too complex, use a symptom diary.

If you are participating in physical, occupational, speech or swallowing therapy, inform your doctor of your progress.

How often do you leave your doctor's office trying to **remember what just happened?** The treatment of Parkinson's disease can be complicated at times.

Bringing along a family member or caregiver to keep track of Instructions may help so you can focus on discussing concerns with your doctor. The doctor can only help with issues and concerns that you provide. Be an active member of your care.



Forms – Make a photocopy of any form that requires completion by your doctor.



Forms may include disability or worker's compensation benefits. Pencil in your response to all of the questions. Examples include how much you can lift and how many stairs you can climb. This helps your doctor understand your disability and better insure success. Keep a copy for your records.

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3. Before you leave your doctor's visit:

Goals: DO YOU HAVE THE INFORMATION YOU NEED TO COMPLY WITH RECOMMENDATIONS FROM YOUR DOCTOR? CAN YOU BE COMPLIANT WITH THE PRESCRIBED RECOMMENDATIONS?

A. Your doctor makes recommendations for treatment with the thought that you will be able to do your part. If you feel the dosing regimen is too complicated or you are sure you will not take the prescribed medicine or therapy, it is better to inform your doctor before difficulties arise.



Our goal to make you feel the best possible relies on your ability and willingness to fulfill your part of the treatment plan. Since every patient is an individual with different lifestyles, treatment plans can be adjusted on a case by case situation to gain the best compliance possible.

B. The following questions should always be answered before leaving your office visit:

- Do you know what symptoms your medicines are treating?
- Do you and your caregiver have answers to your prepared list of questions?
- Do you understand your part of the treatment plan?
- Can you be complete your part of the treatment?