

Talking with Your Doctor

Print these questions out and take them to your next doctor's appointment.

Questions to Ask about Your Medication

- What is the name of the medicine?
- 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?
- What are the possible side effects?
- What do I do if they occur?
- 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?

Questions to Ask about Losing Weight

- Why are weight control and 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?
- Do I have to exercise to lose weight? If so, what kinds of activities do you recommend?
- How much activity do I need to do?
- How much weight gain is too much?

Questions to Ask about Heart Health

- What are my risk factors for heart disease?
- Do I need to lose or gain weight for my health?
- What is my blood pressure, and is it at a healthy level?
- What is my cholesterol, and is it at a healthy level?
- If you are a woman, ask, "What should I know about the effects of menopause on my health?"

Questions to Ask about 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 exercise 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?

Questions to Ask about Physical Activity

- Why is 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?

Questions to Ask about Diet

- 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?
- Do I need to see a nutritionist or dietitian?
- If so, can you recommend one?
- Can I drink alcohol?

Questions to Ask about Quitting Cigarettes and Tobacco

- What can I do to stop the cravings?
- How many minutes do cravings last?
- What about a nicotine patch or gum?
- Can I take a smoking cessation medication?
- After I quit, when will the urges stop?
- How can I keep from gaining weight?
- How long will it take to reduce my risk?

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Tips for Talking to Health Care Professionals

Before you go to your doctor or other health care provider:

Make a list of your questions, symptoms and concerns - ask a friend to help.

Ask a family member or friend to accompany you to your appointment.

If the results of medical tests won't be ready for a few days:

Ask your doctor if your results will be mailed to you or if you should expect a phone call.

Ask who will be available to explain the results to you.

If you need to ask questions later:

Find out whom to call in your health care provider's office, and the best times to call.

If your doctor or nurse advises you to change your diet or lifestyle or suggests you take medicine:

Ask how these changes will help you feel better or improve your health.

Ask what might happen if you don't follow the recommendations.

Ask about specific behavior changes. For example, if you need to increase your physical activity, ask what he or she means by physical activity, how long you should do it and what type of activity will be best for your needs. If your doctor suggests you lose weight, ask how much weight and how long that weight loss should take.

If your health care provider recommends avoiding certain foods:

Make sure you understand what he or she means.

Ask for a list of the foods you shouldn't eat.

Think positive! Get a list of foods that you can eat.

Learn to read food labels so you'll be able to tell how much fat, sodium and other ingredients are in your diet.

Review your progress:

Make a chart to record your progress with nutrition, lifestyle changes, weight loss or gain, blood pressure, cholesterol, etc. Share your results with your doctor.

If you aren't making progress, share those results and ask why your progress is slow.

Ask your doctor if or when you're supposed to come back to have your progress monitored.

If you're taking drugs to lower your blood pressure, ask your doctor if you should have a home blood pressure monitoring kit to see if your medicine is working.

If you're monitoring blood pressure at home, ask when you can expect to see the results from the medicine.

If you're taking many different types of medication:

On a daily calendar, indicate when you should take your medication, then make a check mark when you take it.

Buy an inexpensive plastic pill box marked with the days of the week on it to help you remember to take your medication.

When you visit your doctor, take all of your medications, including over-the-counter drugs like aspirin, with you. Ask your doctor to review them with you to see if there are medications you may not need to take anymore.