

# Preparing For Your Doctor's Appointment

Your relationship with your doctor is one of the most important ones you will have. Advance preparation will help use your doctor's time more efficiently and effectively. When people take an active role in their care, research shows they are more satisfied and do better in how well treatments work. Being prepared for your doctor's visit is important toward becoming a better advocate for your health and well-being.

Preparing for your doctor's appointment can seem overwhelming when you have a lot of information you want to relay to that medical professional, especially if this is your first time meeting with your doctor, or if you have been ill for a long time and you are unsure where to begin. Being organized is important because typically, on average, you will have less than ten minutes to address your concerns. Your medical professional will also have a few issues on his or her mind that they will want to discuss with you in that limited time so quality is more important than quantity. So try to remember what your ultimate goal is and try to stick to what is most important. Your focus should be on those concerns. Is it diagnosis, prognosis, testing, a new treatment plan, or modification of an existing treatment plan? What is the main reason for your visit? Preparing for your appointment can help you understand and answer those questions if you are still unsure.

Start with gathering your supplies. If you have had recent testing results that needs to come with you for the appointment, such as MRI's on cd's, make sure to call ahead so they are ready to be picked up in time for your appointment. If you have had lab tests run and need those results, or need help filling out certain medical forms, (for example, packets that have been provided for you from the provider you are seeing), be sure to provide as much detail as you can. If possible, drop them off ahead of your appointment with your medication list and list of your other medical professionals, including their phone and fax numbers, addresses, and reasons for seeing them. If you use a Fitbit, be sure to download that data and summarize your findings ahead of time to see if there is any correlations or noticeable information you should relay to your doctor.

And finally, be prepared to share your story truthfully and as openly as you can. Instead of just stating the problem, provide details about it. Disclose any smoking, vaping, drinking, CBD, THC, eating habits, mental status, exercise, LGBTQIA physical issues and needs, and any and all unique concerns you have. That will allow your doctor to best openly address your unique situation. Be prepared to express your feelings in a positive way. If you feel unheard, rushed, or need more attention regarding a certain issue that may require an additional appointment to fully address those concerns, be prepared to say so.

The best thing you can do for yourself to handle your appointments and your mental health while managing your care is to make a 3 ring binder now. Trying to keep track of your appointments, tests, phone numbers and fax numbers, medications and other important details is very overwhelming, especially when you are battling an illness.

Get organized! Below are some forms that will help you successfully organize in a way that will allow you to do some of your homework one time so you can prepare more easily on each

individual appointment as it comes. Make sure to print out the *Concerns* page each time you make an appointment immediately. As an appointment nears, you can write your thoughts down on that sheet. Reprint it prior to your appointment and reorganize by priority because, as you know, things can change unexpectedly, and it is imperative to keep track of issues and important details as they change.

Here are some common questions to help you gather your thoughts and relay them to medical professionals as appointments near:

What medical tests do I think I need?

How often will they need to be repeated?

What will the tests tell us?

What do they involve?

How should I get ready?

Will insurance pay for each test?

If not, how much will it cost?

Are there any dangers or side effects?

How and when will I find out the results?

Can I get a copy?

How soon will I need a follow up appointment?

How will you make your diagnosis?

What may have caused this condition?

How long will it last? Is it permanent?

How is this condition treated or managed?

How will it affect me?

What might be the long-term effects?

How can I learn more?

What are my treatment options?

What are the risks and benefits?

Ask yourself which treatment is best for you, given my values and circumstances?

What medications are available for me?

When will they start working?

What are common side effects?

Will I need a refill?

How do I arrange that?

Should I take it with food?

What time of day should I take it?

Should I avoid anything while taking it?

What if I miss a dose?

What can I do to prevent a health problem from developing or getting worse?

How will changing my habits help?

Are there any risks to making this change?

Are there support groups or community services that might help me?

Keeping a 3 ring binder and being organized will give you peace of mind, knowing that at every appointment you will have everything you need to answer every question your doctor may have. That can make a difference between getting answers to your questions at your appointment or having to wait for a phone call for those answers. It also saves time getting ready for future appointments with new specialists. Having test data and dates at your fingertips is always handy, too. Because trying to remember those details is difficult, the freedom not to worry about them is a gift to yourself.

### *3 Ring Medical Binder Forms*

The following pages will help you keep your important medical information organized. These pages will be useful in creating a 3 ring binder for yourself that you should take with you to every medical appointment, including all tests, and even dentist appointments! Be as thorough as you can when you fill these out these forms as you prepare your medical binder. The following pages are:

#### *'Concerns'*

You may find that you might like to print multiple copies of this form and add it to each tabbed section. For example, for each provider, print a separate *'Concern'* sheet and add it to the corresponding tab for each provider to keep track of your thoughts prior to appointments. Then, as an appointment nears with that provider, move that concern sheet to the front of your binder, go over it again, re-print it, and re-organize your thoughts, as circumstances may have changed since you first started taking notes.

#### *'At A Glance'*

Keep this near the front of your binder so you don't accidentally make conflicting follow up appointments. Also, if you have reoccurring appointments such as rehab appointments that are frequent, you may want to use a separate the *'At A Glance'* Page to keep track of those frequently occurring appointments, separate from the overall appointments.

#### *'Medications List'*

Remember to update this form when you are given new medications, as doses change, medications are stopped, and if you start taking new supplements or replace supplements with a different brand of supplement that may have different makeups than the previous brand you were taking.

#### *'Symptom Description List'*

Keep track of your symptoms on these sheets. If they change, the frequency, intensity, when they stop or start, if they worsen at certain times of the day, if you couldn't eat, affected by certain foods, losing sleep, had to sleep with a wedge, had to sleep in recliner, had to lie down, couldn't exercise or had to limit physical activity, missed work or social functions, controlled by OTC, prescription drugs or home remedies.

#### *'Medical Professionals List'*

This form is to keep your medical provider's contact information with you including phone, address, and fax numbers with you so if during an appointment you are asked to furnish a test result or other diagnosis, you are able to provide required contact info to expedite that result.

#### *'Long Covid-19 Symptom List'*

This list is a very extensive list of over 200 symptoms associated with Long Covid-19. They are separated by body symptom for the ease of medical professionals to be able to apply to their practice. As many Long Haulers have had to wait extensive amounts of time to be seen, it is easy to forget some of the symptoms that may have come and gone. This list may help you remember some that also may have become such a part of your life you have forgotten that they weren't a part of your life pre-Covid.

#### *'Covid Vaccine Persistent Symptom List'*

This list is a list of the top 20 reported symptoms reported by people to have occurred after having received Covid-19 vaccines. Many of the symptoms from this list and the list from '*Long Covid-19 Symptom List*' are similar and cross over. Please also refer to both lists as references.

#### *'EMERGENCY CONTACT'*

This form is two-fold, the obvious being if something were to happen to you medically while you are in possession of your binder, a good Samaritan can easily contact someone that you would like to know that you are in need emergency medical care. Also, if you were to misplace this very important medical tool, your contact information will also be included on this document, and it can be returned to you safely.

Below are some examples of some tabs that you may like to create for your binder:

Personal

Primary

Neurology

Immunology

Internal Medicine

Gastroenterology

Physical Therapy

Occupational Therapy

Speech Therapy

Therapy

Bills

Studies

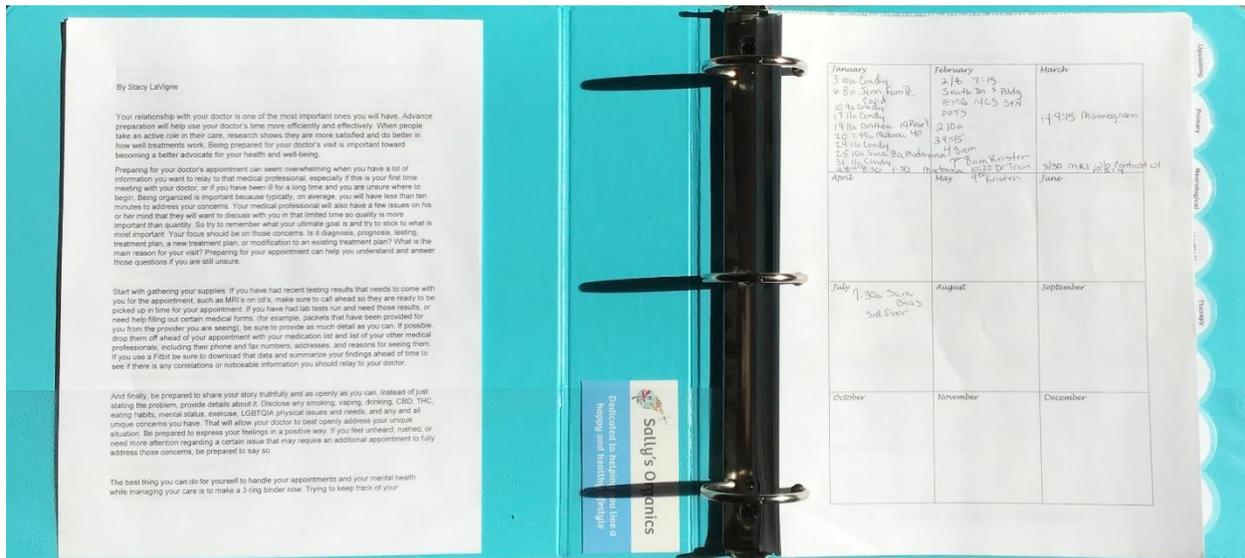
Travel Expenses

Upcoming

Personal Information

Medication

Tests



We hope that this is a good starting point for you to gather your medical documents and organize them in one place. At the end of each appointment remember to ask your medical provider for a copy of what was discussed at your appointment for that day. You can call and request any documentation from previous appointments and tests that you do not already possess currently to add to your binder. The more complete your documentation is, the more successful your appointment will be.

*The information provided herein is for general informational purposes only and is not intended as medical advice or a substitute for professional health care. Please consult appropriate health care professional for your specific needs.*