

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?

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?

Talking with Your Doctor

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, 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.

Talking with Your Doctor

Questions to Ask at Your Next Visit

It is important to talk openly with your doctor and ask questions about your health problems and treatments. Below are examples of questions you may want to ask your doctor. Print this list and take it with you to your next office visit.

High blood pressure and diabetes

- What is high blood pressure?
- Do I have high blood pressure?
- What is diabetes?
- What type of diabetes do I have?
- Does having high blood pressure and diabetes put me at risk for other health problems, such as heart disease?
- Can I feel my high blood pressure?
- What is my blood pressure goal?
- What is my blood sugar level goal?
- How often should my blood pressure be checked?
- How often should I check my blood sugar levels?
- Are there steps I can take to help control both my blood pressure and my diabetes?
- Is there a medicine that may help control my blood pressure?

Medicine

- What is the name of the medicine?
- How does this medicine work?
- How and when do I take this medicine?
- For how long will I need to take this medicine?
- What foods, drinks, other medicines, and activities should I avoid while taking this medicine?
- What side effects might I have while taking this medicine?
- What should I do if I notice side effects?
- What should I do if I miss a dose of my medicine?
- How often may I need to have the medicine refilled?
- How will I know if the medicine is working?
- What are the risks for taking this medicine?
- What are the risks for NOT taking this medicine?
- Will this medicine affect my other health goals, such as losing weight or controlling my diabetes?

Weight loss

- What is a healthy weight goal for me?
- How much weight should I aim to lose each week?
- How often should I check my weight?

Exercise

- How can exercise help me?
- What types of exercise are safe for me to do?
- How often should I exercise?
- What can I do to keep my blood sugar levels stable while exercising?

Diet

- What types of foods should I avoid or eat more of?
- How much salt and sugar should I limit myself to each day?
- How many calories or grams of fat should I eat each day? Can you give me examples of these amounts?
- How can I get help changing my diet?
- Can I drink alcohol (wine, beer, hard liquor)?

Quitting cigarettes and tobacco

- What can I do to ease the urge to smoke?
- Can I take a medicine or use a nicotine patch or gum to help me stop smoking?
- After quitting, how can I keep from gaining weight?
- How long will it take after quitting to lower my risk for other health problems, such as heart disease?

Talking with Your Doctor

Tips for Making the Most of Each Visit

The tips below can help you prepare for and make the most of each doctor visit. These tips can also help you stay on track with treatment after your visit.

Before your office visit:

- Make a list of your questions, symptoms, and concerns. Bring this list to your next visit
- Ask a family member or friend to go with you to your appointment
- Make a list of all the prescription, over-the-counter, and herbal medicines and supplements you take, as well as their doses and how often you take them. Bring this list to your next visit

During your visit:

- Review your list of symptoms, questions, and concerns
- Review the medicines you are taking and ask about any changes that may need to be made
- Write down any instructions you need to follow after your visit. This may include changes to your diet or exercise routines
- Learn how to read food labels so you can know how much fat, salt (sodium), and cholesterol are in each serving
- Ask for the name and contact information of a person you can call if you have questions after your visit
- Ask your doctor when the results of any tests will be ready
 - Ask if the results will be mailed to you or if the office will call you
 - Ask to receive a copy of the results

After your visit:

- Use the Blood Pressure and Treatment Trackers on this site to help track your progress toward your health goals. You may also want to track changes to your blood sugar levels, exercise, diet, weight, and cholesterol
 - Bring this chart to your next visit and review it with your doctor
 - If you are not making progress or seeing change, ask your doctor what else you can do, or why your progress is slow
- Use a calendar, alarm, or pillbox to help you remember to take your medicines each day
- Call the doctor before starting any new medicine, including prescription, over-the-counter, and herbal medicines and supplements