

# Questions to ask your doctor

You'll get more out of your health care if you're well informed about any treatments, medicines or tests that your doctor or other health professional recommends – and that means asking questions. This guide will help you decide what questions you need to ask.

Asking questions and being informed means that, together with your health professionals, you are in a better position to make the best health care decisions for you. It can also help keep you safe when receiving health care.

Remembering these questions will be easier if you print or write them down and take them with you when you see your doctor.

It's also a good idea to write down the names of any medicines you take if you think you won't remember them, and take along a notebook and pen in case you need to write down any information.

Here are some suggested questions you might consider asking. Write down your own questions as well before your appointment so you don't forget them.

Write down questions and take them with you when you see your doctor.

## Questions about health problems

- What is the name of the condition? Are there any other names it's known by?
- Could you write it down?
- How serious is this condition?
- What causes it?
- Can I pass it on to other people?

# Questions to ask your doctor

## Questions about health problems (continued)

- Is it likely to get worse? Or is it likely to get better?
- Is treatment required? If so, what is it?
- Do I need to see any other health professionals, such as specialists, physiotherapists, dietitians or dentists?
- Is there anything I can do to improve it myself?
- How long is it likely to last?
- Are there support groups for people with this problem and how would I contact them?

## Questions about treatments

Treatments cover a wide range of things and can include medicines (see below), procedures, lifestyle changes, such as diet and exercise, and interventions, such as physiotherapy.

- How effective is this treatment?
- Are there any risks or side effects?
- Are there other ways to treat the condition?
- How long will I need the treatment for?
- What will happen if I don't have the treatment?
- How much will the treatment cost?
- Will the cost be covered by Medicare, my concession or Veterans Affairs card or by private health insurance?

## Questions about medicines

Consider creating a medicines list that includes details of your medicines such as the name, strength, and how often you take it. You can download a medicines list from NPS MedicineWise.

- Why do I need this medicine?
- How long do I need to take this medicine for?

# Questions to ask your doctor

## Questions about medicines (continued)

- Are there any side effects of taking the medicine?
- What should I do if I experience side effects?
- Are there any other medicines that can help me but without any side effects?
- What would happen if I don't take the medicine – would my health get worse?
- When should I take this medicine?
- Should I take it with food or drink?
- Will it interact with any other medicines I take, including any vitamins, herbal medicine or other complementary medicine?
- Can I drink alcohol while I'm taking this medicine?
- Does the medicine need to be stored in the fridge?
- If the pharmacist offers me a different brand of the same medicine, is it ok to take it?
- What should I do if I miss my regular dose?
- Can I take this medicine if I am pregnant?
- How much will it cost? Will the cost be covered by the PBS, my concession or Veterans Affairs card or by private health insurance?

## Questions about tests

There are many kinds of tests you may need, such as blood tests, urine tests, X-rays and scans.

Some tests are simple and there are clear benefits to having them – having regular pap tests if you're a woman is one example. But with other tests there may be potential disadvantages as well as advantages for you to think about.

Some tests, like mammograms, are screening tests and cannot be used to make a diagnosis. Other tests can help your doctor make a diagnosis.

# Questions to ask your doctor

## Questions about tests (continued)

It's important you know the different and understand what your results will mean before you have the test. These questions will help you discuss the pros and cons of testing with your doctor.

- What is the test for?
- How is the test done?
- How often do I need to have the test done?
- What are the benefits of having the test?
- Are there any risks of having this test?
- Are there any alternative tests?
- How accurate are the results of the test?
- What will a positive result mean?
- What will a negative result mean?
- Can this test diagnose a problem or will I need further testing?
- Do I need to prepare for the test (for example, fasting beforehand)?
- How much will the test cost?
- Is it covered by Medicare, my concession or Veterans Affairs card or my private health insurance?
- How soon do I need to have the test?
- How do I book in to have the test and what is the usual waiting period?
- When and how will I get the results?

## Your own questions

Write down your own questions to take to your doctor. If there's anything a doctor or other health professional tells you that you don't understand, don't be afraid to ask them to repeat the information or to write the information down for you

Source: HealthDirect Australia

For more information, visit:

<http://www.healthdirect.gov.au/#!/questions-to-ask-your-doctor>

