

CLINICAL APPOINTMENTS SUMMARY

TAKE ACTION AT YOUR HEALTHCARE APPOINTMENTS

This section is focused on helping you get the most out of your healthcare appointments. You will get more out of these appointments if you are ready for them. ***Preparing and organizing information for your wellness team is often overlooked, but is time well spent.***

A key element to taking action is having the information available that you and your wellness team will need to discuss. The worksheets that follow will help you organize your information and will need to be updated occasionally, sometimes before each visit.

Healthcare appointments are intended to encompass visits with all of the following healthcare providers on your wellness team:

- Doctor (primary care physician, neurologist, movement disorder specialist)
- Specialist (gynecologist, urologist, sleep specialist, physical therapist, speech and language pathologist, occupational therapist, recreational therapist, art therapist, music therapist)
- Alternative therapist (acupuncturist, chiropractor)
- Dentist
- Optometrist
- Social worker
- Emotional health specialist (counselor, psychologist, psychiatrist)
- Dietitian

As you update your information, file older worksheets in a specific location so that you and your wellness team can refer to them later as a measure of your progress over time.

GET THE MOST FROM YOUR APPOINTMENT

As you learn to communicate your needs and current status with the various members of your wellness team, you will help each specialist better understand what you are experiencing. When you provide detailed information, you help your team be in the best position to improve both your quality of care and your quality of life.

Many things can cause your healthcare appointments to be less than satisfying. In some instances, you might not remember important details about a visit, especially if you are anxious, are learning things for the first time or have hearing problems, multiple medical problems or memory difficulties. In addition, you may have difficulty expressing yourself, forget what you were going to say or be hesitant to ask questions. ***These are all common***

EVERY VICTORY COUNTS

 **experiences, even for people who do not have Parkinson's.** Utilizing the worksheets in this section will help you avoid these familiar pitfalls.

The following steps are provided to help optimize your time and enhance communication with your wellness team.

Step 1: Before Your Appointment

Write down your overarching goals for the appointment. It is very helpful to take some time and think about what is important to you. This will help you focus the appointment on your most pressing concerns.

- Complete the “Goal Summary for Doctor Visits” worksheet before your visit and bring a copy to share with your doctor.

Note specific questions and concerns before your visit. Sometimes you may forget to ask important questions during your healthcare appointment, so writing them down will remind you to ask.

- Prioritize your questions with the most important one first as you may not have the time to address everything in one visit.
- Allow space to write answers next to the question so you can refer to them later. It may also help to have your care partner or bring a friend or family member to the appointment with you to write the answers for you.
- If you are a care partner, your questions and concerns are important, too. Remember to add these to the list and be prepared to address them during the appointment.

Keep a record of any changes your doctor makes to your treatment for quick reference.

Some ways to keep good records include:

- Keeping a dedicated notebook for your healthcare visits.
- Completing the “Daily Medication Log” and showing this to all members of your wellness team before starting treatment. This will lower risk of medication interactions.
- In the “Overall Medication Log,” note how each medication you are currently taking or have taken affects you, being sure to mention any side effects you have experienced.
- Keeping copies of previous brain MRIs, CT scans and any other medical test or procedure you have had.
- Updating medical notes and contact information for current and previous healthcare providers (start by filling out the “Wellness Team Contact Information” sheet).



Step 2: Appointment Day

Maximize your time with your healthcare provider. Plan ahead, arrive early and complete forms accurately. These steps will save time for both you and your healthcare provider. Begin by asking your healthcare provider what information is needed from you. Ask questions that are important early during your appointment; don't wait until the end.

Complete the patient questionnaire forms provided by your healthcare provider. These forms can help improve communication, provide information for your record, allow your healthcare provider to spend more time on you and reduce errors and mistakes, especially when tracking your medications. Medications are a primary means of managing Parkinson's and accuracy can greatly affect how well your healthcare provider can control your symptoms.

If writing is difficult for you, ask your care partner or a family member or friend to assist you in completing the forms. In some cases, you might even be able to call and request the forms ahead of time, giving you more time to complete them at home before your appointment.

Remember these tips on the day of your appointment:

- Arrive at least 30 minutes early to complete any forms.
- Always bring a complete list of your medications (such as the “Daily Medication Log”) to reduce errors that can occur from one visit to the next. Do not use statements like, “no changes,” “same as last visit” or “the doctor knows what I am on.” This is how errors occur!
- Visit the restroom before the start of your appointment to ensure comfort throughout the visit.
- Ask for extra copies of forms for future visits. Store them with your records and complete them at home before your next appointment.
- Schedule your appointments during your medication “on” times. This will reduce symptoms during the appointment. In some cases, it may be beneficial to schedule appointments during your “off” periods. For example, your neurologist might benefit from seeing you when your medication is “off.” Talk with your doctor if you are unsure.
- Ask your doctor for permission to audio record your appointment for future reference.
- If applicable, bring your care partner with you to your appointment.

Ask questions and learn about your condition. To ensure a productive dialogue with your doctor, come prepared with questions you want to ask and note the answers. Important questions to ask include:

- What are the symptoms or problems that are related to my Parkinson's and what symptoms should I look for?
 - Do I need medication? If so, what should I expect medication to change or improve?
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EVERY VICTORY COUNTS

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- What are the most common side effects of the medication you are considering for me?
 - Are there any known drug interactions with over-the-counter medications?
 - What symptoms or side effects should be reported immediately?
 - How often should I make appointments? (Ask yourself how often you would like to see your doctor, then share this with them.)
 - Where can I find accurate and comprehensive information about my symptoms?
 - When should I see a physical therapist, occupational therapist, speech therapist, counselor or other specialist?

Step 3: After the Appointment

How often do you leave your healthcare appointment trying to remember what just happened?
Do you have trouble following through with your treatment plan?

The following suggestions will help you stay on track between appointments:

- Bring a care partner, family member or friend to write down instructions and help you keep track of your next steps.
- Complete the remaining sections of the form “Goal Summary for Clinic Visits.” You are more likely to follow through with changes if you review your goals and write down the action steps needed to get you there.
- Review the information in your “Goal Summary for Clinic Visits” with the other members of your wellness team to involve them in your treatment.
- Keep a journal or a calendar of your goals for the week and steps you have taken to reach them.

Between Appointments

- Keep a list of any changes that result from calls to your doctor about new symptoms experienced between appointments.
- Keep track of medication refill needs before you run out. Provide your pharmacy with your phone number, fax number and/or address for quicker refills.
- Keep a list of prior medicines that were tried and not effective or caused side effects so that they are not used again. You can do this in the “Overall Medication Log.”
- Review your goals written in the “Goal Summary for Doctor Visits” worksheet and update on your progress.
- Ask each healthcare professional on your wellness team what information is important for you to bring to each visit so that you can work together as a team.



Appointment Checklist

The following information will be helpful to you and your wellness team over time. The worksheets referenced in this section are intended for you to use to help organize your information and maximize the usefulness of your healthcare appointments.

- Complete your doctor's patient questionnaire, or use the "Parkinson's Care Questionnaire."
- Keep a list of medications to include name, strength, timing, generic or trade name. Consider using the "Daily Medication Log."
- Keep a list of all the medications you've tried over the course of living with Parkinson's, being sure to note side effects or reasons specific medications were discontinued. Consider using the "Overall Medication Log."
- Keep a list of all your treating healthcare professionals, including name, address and fax number. Consider using the "Wellness Team Contact Information."
- Keep a list of troublesome side effects to discuss with your doctor. Consider using the "My Symptoms Worksheet."

Remember to bring the following on appointment day:

- Updated "Daily Medication Log."
- Updated "My Symptoms Worksheet."
- Updated "Goal Summary for Doctor Visits" assessment.
- Updated "Current Symptoms Summary."
- Updated "Parkinson's Care Questionnaire."
- Updated "Dental Worksheet" and "Medical Summary for Dentists" if visiting a dental provider.
- List of questions to ask before your visit.

These steps require some effort on your part. They will, however, save time in the long run and most importantly, help you obtain the greatest possible benefit from your healthcare appointments.