



SDCRI Patient Agenda for First Doctor Visit

We all need to be our own healthcare advocate. We need to be prepared when visiting our healthcare providers, come to the first visit bearing a list of questions, have a copy of your medical history/records, insurance card, a list of other healthcare providers with their contact information and **bring along someone you trust to listen and take notes.**

How to choose a healthcare provider.

- It is very helpful if the new physician you will be seeing comes highly recommended by your referring physicians, specialists, family members and/or friends you trust.
- Read about the physician before you go to see him for the first time
- Be observant about the clinic staff: are they kind and caring? Are they knowledgeable? Do they seem to be pleased where they work?
- What treatments and services does this group offer?
- Do they offer financial assistance if you were to need it?
- Reminder: the physicians many times can be very busy and overwhelmed themselves, so don't take anything personal. The medical system is not an ideal nurturing place for patients, nurses, staff or doctors. Fortunately, there are countless number of people who are doing their best to help the system improve into a more "evolved healing environment" for all.
- Do a short visualization before your visit. Visualize a good and harmonious interaction with the doctor and the staff.

Questions to ask.

The following are general questions. You should make them specific to your diagnosis. You may want to give the physician a copy of both lists below at your first appointment. **Make sure to place the most important questions first** in case you don't have time to address each one. You can always make another appointment if you still have questions you want answered. Remember that the nurses are always great resources for your questions too, if you weren't able to have some of your questions answered by the doctor.

- Do you have prior experience with this ___?
- What may have caused my ___?
- From the existing data, what is the expected outcome of ___?
- Can you refer me to resources to support my diagnosis and treatment plan?
- Where is the tumor/cancer/disease in my body? Please show me on a chart or draw a picture.
- What are the immediate treatment options available to me?

- How long will this treatment last?
- What, if any, are the side effects of the treatment?
- Will you be formulating a treatment plan?
- If I do nothing what is the expected outcome?
- Does diet and lifestyle changes have any impact on treatment and outcome?
- Do you continue to follow-up with me during this journey?
- How will the diagnosis and treatments affect my life?
- Will my condition affect others?
- Do you have other patients with this diagnosis who would be willing to talk with me?
- Will my insurance cover the tests and treatments?

Your second list to give to you doctor should have the following information:

- My signs, symptoms and when they started. What made them better and what made them worse.
- If you are in pain, how severe is it on a scale of 1 to 10.10 being the worst.
- List or bring a bag containing all the medications you take including vitamins, herbals and supplements.
- List anything else they should know: I live alone, I am claustrophobic, I am afraid of needles, and I have panic attacks...you get the idea.
- Do not withhold important information.
 1. Alcohol Habit: Drink of choice? How many per day? Binge? Alcoholic?
 2. Smoking Habit: When did you start? How many a day?
 3. Lifestyle: Sedentary? Junk food junkie?
 4. Drugs: Are you on Opioids? Do you use Cannabis? Addictions; past & present.

Additional questions for Surgeons

- How soon can I get this surgery/biopsy done?
- Where will it be done?
- Will I require general anesthesia?
- Will I stay overnight?
- How will you determine that the ____ was all removed?
- Will I need further treatment? (radiation for example)
- Do you have a nurse/case manager for post-op care and questions?
- Will I be given wound and bandage care instructions?
- Will I need pain management?
- How long will it take to heal?

After the first visit.

- Did you like the staff? Were they friendly and helpful?
- Did you like and trust your physician?
- Was the physician easy to talk to?
- Did they listen to your questions?

- Did they answer them satisfactorily and in a way that you understood?
- How did you feel after the visit?
- Was the visit rushed?
- Do you want a second opinion? You have the right to ask for one.

Keeping your medical records.

You will want to bring a copy of your important medical records with you to each appointment. Sometimes you have information that your healthcare provider hasn't received yet.

This is to give you a general idea of what to have in your binder.

- Purchase a large capacity 3 ring binder.
- Purchase tab dividers with pockets for the binder.
- Organize each tab section
 1. By doctor: primary physician, oncologist, radiation oncologist, for example.
 2. In each doctor's section: Lab reports, medical notes, medication information, diet information, your list of questions for each doctor.
 3. Financial/insurance information. Bills & paid invoices, contact information for your insurance plan. Information for financial help given to you by your healthcare provider.
 4. Medical History. Include medications you are taking. Prescription drugs and over the counter Medications like vitamins, herbs, supplements, pain relievers etc.
 5. Contact/Emergency information. This section is important so that you have all the information in one place in case you need it immediately. Contact information from each of your doctors, people you can count on in an emergency, organizations that may be helpful. I would also include contact information from your employment, if you are working, and/or your partner's employment information. If you have children include contact information from their schools or sitters.
 6. Use the pockets for any additional information you want to keep. Business cards, names & phone numbers of the new friends you met in the waiting room or during your treatment. Photos of loved ones. Cards with positive messages.
- Get a basket or pretty bag to carry your binder in. It may get heavy!