

## Doc Talk 101: A Crash Course in Talking to Doctors

Even though my dad is a doctor, I didn't know much about effectively talking to doctors as a patient. It never occurred to me to ask him how to *talk* to a doctor when I first started my health journey. I assumed it was just like talking to regular people. So I sat down with my dad, and he gave me the 411 on doctorspeak, which is so important and something we all should know. He hooked me up. Now I can share it with you. Thanks, Dad!

### Initial Appointment

**Rehearse.** Rule of thumb: when preparing for a doctor's appointment, pretend you have ten minutes to talk to the doctor. Practice ahead of time what you want to say to make sure you are concise during your appointment.

**Make lists.** Write down all of the topics, questions, and symptoms you want to discuss.

**Eliminate redundancy.** Make sure you're not telling the doctor the same thing twice or three times. "I'm tired," "I'm fatigued," and "I'm sleepy" are all the same symptom. Be precise, and don't double back on symptoms. Apply the same guideline to your questions; make sure your list of questions doesn't include the same question worded multiple ways.

**Decide what is most important.** Ask yourself, what is your most important symptom? After that, move onto the next most important symptom. Apply the same guideline to your

questions: rank them from most important to least important.

**Write down your medications.** Come prepared with a list of medicines you are taking now or have taken in the recent past. Say what you have been on and why you were taken off other meds. Always consider supplements as medicines and put them on the list too. You can even consider giving a doctor a written list of what you're taking.

**Explain your diet.** Be prepared to talk about your diet and what and why you eat a certain way. Mention any special diets you've been on and how they made you feel. Make sure your symptoms list includes dramatic or unusual weight loss or gain.

**Bring documentation.** If you have any test results and lab reports, images, emergency room visit charts, or other medical reports from other health care pros, bring them to your first visit with a new doc.

**Stay calm and matter-of-fact.** As hard as it is for you to deal with chronic issues and scary symptoms, the more emotions you show, the harder it is for the doctor to deal with the medical problem in the short amount of time that you have.

### Follow-Up Appointments

**Update your lists.** Start with the same lists of symptoms and questions you used at the first appointment. What has happened with that

## *Let's Get Organized*

You should have a document on your computer that lists all the basic info for your A-team members. Load this document onto your smartphone so you can take it with you to every health care appointment you have. That way, it will be easily accessible if, let's say, you're planning to see a new specialist and need to fax something to your primary doc's office or you need two team members to communicate on an issue. You won't have to go home, get the necessary information, call the specialist's office back later, and wait on hold to terrible elevator music for ten minutes just to give them what they need. If you have everything right there on your phone, one, two, three, and you're done.

Your A-team list should include the name of each person and what they specialize in or are good at. The key is simplification.

Name  
Specialty  
Address  
Phone number  
Fax number  
Email (if possible)  
Nurse's name  
Nurse's email

symptom between then and now? Is your top question the same as at the first visit, or has it changed?

**Focus on what's different and not different.** Talk about what has changed and what has stayed the same. Discuss what seems improved and what has not improved, if relevant.

Thanks for checking out my book!  
Be sure to visit my blog for more info that can help you be your own best advocate and navigate your way through chronic illness.

*♥, Amy*