

Section 9

Health Related Issues



Discussing Changes in Your Health: Worksheet

By the National Institute on Aging

Your doctor may want to know about any changes in your life since your last appointment. It is useful to consider what you should say before you see the doctor. The list below can help. Of course, all the things on this list won't apply at every visit!

Make a copy of the blank list so you will always have a clean copy to use. Then, take a minute to think about each of these possible topics. You may want to jot down when you first noticed each change. You can use the last column to note any additional information that may be helpful for the doctor to know.

Your Health		
Topic	Date	Notes
Bone/joint pain or stiffness		
Bowel problems		
Chest pain		
Feeling dizzy or lightheaded		
Headaches		
Hearing changes		
Losing urine or feeling wet		
Recent hospitalizations or emergencies		
Shortness of breath		
Skin changes		
Vision changes		

Your Diet, Medication, and Lifestyle

Topic	Date	Notes
Alcohol use		
Appetite changes		
Diet/nutrition		
Medicines		
Tobacco use		
Weight changes		

Your Thoughts and Feelings

Topic	Date	Notes
Feeling lonely or isolated		
Feeling sad, down, or blue		
Intimacy or sexual activity		
Problems with memory or thinking		
Problems with sleep or changes in sleep patterns		

Everyday Living

Topic	Date	Notes
Accidents, injuries, or falls		
Advance directives		
Daily activities		
Driving/transportation/mobility		
Exercise		
Living situation		

Source: NIH: National Institute on Aging: <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/discussing-changes-your-health-worksheet>.

How to Prepare for a Doctor's Appointment: Talking with Your Doctor

By the National Institute on Aging

A basic plan can help you make the most of your appointment whether you are starting with a new doctor or continuing with the doctor you've seen for years. The following tips will make it easier for you and your doctor to cover everything you need to talk about.

List and Prioritize Your Concerns

Make a list of what you want to discuss. For example, do you have a new symptom you want to ask the doctor about? Do you want to get a flu shot? Are you concerned about how a treatment is affecting your daily life? If you have more than a few items to discuss, put them in order and ask about the most important ones first. Don't put off the things that are really on your mind until the end of your appointment—bring them up right away!

Take Information With You

Some doctors suggest you put all your prescription drugs, over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal remedies or supplements in a bag and bring them with you. Others recommend you bring a list of everything you take and the dose. You should also take your insurance cards, names and phone numbers of other doctors you see, and your medical records if the doctor doesn't already have them.

Consider Bringing a Family Member or Friend

Sometimes it is helpful to bring a family member or close friend with you. Let your family member or friend know in advance what you want from your visit. Your companion can remind you what you planned to discuss with the doctor if you forget. She or he can take notes for you and can help you remember what the doctor said.

Tips: Getting Started with a New Doctor

Your first meeting is a good time to talk with the doctor and the office staff about some communication basics.

- **First name or last name.** When you see the doctor and office staff, introduce yourself and let them know by what name you prefer to be called. For example: "Hello, my name is Mrs. Martinez," or "Good morning, my name is Bob Smith. Please call me Bob."
- **Ask how the office runs.** Learn what days are busiest and what times are best to call. Ask what to do if there is an emergency, or if you need a doctor when the office is closed.
- **Share your medical history.** Tell the doctor about your illnesses, operations, medical conditions, and other doctors you see. You may want to ask the doctor to send you a copy of the medical history form before your visit so you can fill it out at

home, where you have the time and information you need to complete it. If you have problems understanding how to fill out any of the forms, ask for help. Some community organizations provide this kind of help.

- **Share former doctors' names.** Give the new doctor all of your former doctors' names and addresses, especially if they are in a different city. This is to help your new doctor get copies of your medical records. Your doctor will ask you to sign a medical release form giving him or her permission to request your records.

Be Sure You Can See and Hear As Well As Possible

Many older people use glasses or need aids for hearing. Remember to take your eyeglasses to the doctor's visit. If you have a hearing aid, make sure that it is working well and wear it. Let the doctor and staff know if you have a hard time seeing or hearing. For example, you may want to say: "My hearing makes it hard to understand everything you're saying. It helps a lot when you speak slowly."

Plan to Update the Doctor

Let your doctor know what has happened in your life since your last visit. If you have been treated in the emergency room or by a specialist, tell the doctor right away. Mention any changes you have noticed in your appetite, weight, sleep, or energy level. Also tell the doctor about any recent changes in any medications you take or the effects they have had on you.

Request an Interpreter if You Know You'll Need One

If the doctor you selected or were referred to doesn't speak your language, ask the doctor's office to provide an interpreter. Even though some English-speaking doctors know basic medical terms in Spanish or other languages, you may feel more comfortable speaking in your own language, especially when it comes to sensitive subjects, such as sexuality or depression. Call the doctor's office ahead of time, as they may need to plan for an interpreter to be available.

Always let the doctor, your interpreter, or the staff know if you do not understand your diagnosis or the instructions the doctor gives you. Don't let language barriers stop you from asking questions or voicing your concerns.

How to Use an Interpreter

- Consider telling your interpreter what you want to talk about with your doctor before the appointment.
- If your language is spoken in multiple countries, such as Spanish, and your interpreter does not come from the same country or background as you, use universal terms to describe your symptoms and communicate your concerns.
- Make sure your interpreter understands your symptoms or condition so that he or she can correctly translate your message to the doctor. You don't want the doctor to prescribe the wrong medication!
- Don't be afraid to let your interpreter know if you did not understand something that was said, even if you need to ask that it be repeated several times.

Resources in Spanish

If you are looking for information in Spanish, the National Institute on Aging has resources that can help. Visit www.nia.nih.gov/health/espanol/temas for online resources or call 1-800--222--2225 or visit <https://order.nia.nih.gov> to get copies of free publications from NIA.

For More Information About Getting Ready to Visit the Doctor

- **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services**
1-800-633-4227 (toll-free)
1-877-486-2048 (TTY / toll-free)
www.medicare.gov
- **MedlinePlus**
National Library of Medicine
www.medlineplus.gov

Source: NIH: National Institute on Aging: <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/how-prepare-doctors-appointment>.

Daily Pain Journal

Date:	
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Time	Activity	Pain Rating (0 - 10)	Pain Medications Taken (Yes/No)	Other Pain Relief Methods Uses (List)
a.m. 12:00				
1:00				
2:00				
3:00				
4:00				
5:00				
6:00				
7:00				
8:00				
9:00				
10:00				
11:00				
p.m. 12:00				
1:00				
2:00				
3:00				
4:00				
5:00				
6:00				
7:00				
8:00				
9:00				
10:00				
11:00				