

## Preparing for Medical Appointments

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### Medical Notebook

A medical notebook is useful for logging appointments, questions and follow ups. You can write questions ahead of time, list prescriptions you need refilled, etc. It's much easier to remember details from your appointment when you keep a log.

### Keep a medical year at a glance page

Examples:

- Jan 15 – March 1: PT for right hip
- August 1: Mammogram
- May: diagnosed with Osteoporosis
- Oct 10: started new medication\_\_\_ from Dr. XYZ
- November: Annual flu shot

This can be helpful for future doctor's office forms, and for social security disability hearings and follow up reports). *It could be a sheet at the front of the notebook or a note on your phone.*

### Have a checklist for each appointment

- Do I need Rx refills?
- What are my main questions for the appointment?
- What are my follow up instructions?
- Who do I contact in the office if I have questions or concerns after the appointment?

### Functional Data and Symptom Tracking

- By tracking your symptoms in a calendar, you can provide clear, factual data to your provider. For example: I've had 14 days of migraine symptoms in the past 30 days; My daily pain range is from 5 on good days to 9 on bad days, with most days averaging 6.
- *Functional data is critical.* Tell your doctor how the pain affects your daily life/chores. Examples of relatable facts:
  - Most days I cannot make dinner.
  - I am only able to shower every 3 days.
  - I can only leave the house 2 days a week for appointments or errands, as I need a few days to recover after each outing.
- When starting a new medication, record side effects and track to see if your symptoms improve over time. To know if the medicine's helping you need to record your pain.

### **For the appointment itself**

- Consider taking your partner or other close person to the appointment with you, for support and note-taking.
- Keep a list of your prescriptions with you. Keep it up to date and include doses, how many times you take it, etc. Often it's easier to give the provider a copy of it than to list everything each visit. It's also good to keep this info in your wallet, in case of an emergency.
- Have a #1 issue you want to discuss and do this first.
- Have a #2 issue and see if you can fit it in. The time goes quickly and prioritizing will help.
- Ask if they think any complementary treatments would be helpful.  
For example:
  - physical therapy as a way to rebuild strength
  - acupuncture or chiropractic care
  - mental health therapy or mindfulness techniques
  - nutrition, dietary and/or supplements
- Request an appointment summary/report before you leave the office. Many providers have shifted to this practice to ensure patients have written instructions before they leave.
- Some providers also have online portals for your medical information, for retrieving test results, scheduling appointments, and even emailing questions or concerns in-between appointments.

Once your appointment is done, go home and rest up. Review any follow up actions, like picking up a prescription, and plan to complete. Being prepared takes effort, but it will be rewarding over time.