

The Office Visit:

What You Need To Know & Do



Pat F. Bass III, MD, MS, MPH
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Disclaimer

Information

The contents of this is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read on the DiabetesPlan.org Site!

If you think you may have a medical emergency, call your doctor or 911 immediately.

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Preface



In my career, I have noticed patients often leave a doctor's office confused and befuddled about what they need to do to get their chronic medical condition under control. Unfortunately, medical education has not focused enough on teaching doctors to communicate what their patients 'Need to Know & Need to Do'.

In this guide, I hope to show you some of the things you can do to get and put information from your doctor into action-- getting more out of your next doctor's visit.

Please go to www.diabetesplan.org and let me know if you found this guide useful, have some constructive criticism, or feel other information should be included. I look forward to interacting with you in the Diabetes Plan community.

Thanks

About Me

What I do

I am currently an Associate Professor of Medicine & Pediatrics at Louisiana State University Health Science Center in Shreveport, Louisiana where I care for both adults and children.

In addition to an active clinical practice and medical education activities, I participate in health literacy research focusing 'What do patients need to know?' and 'What do patients need to do?' about their medical problems to improve their health.

I also work as a freelance medical writer and editor.

Education

I completed my medical degree and combined residency in Internal Medicine and Pediatrics at Louisiana State University Health Science Center in Shreveport, Louisiana. I am board certified in both Internal Medicine and Pediatrics by the American Board of Internal Medicine and the American Board of Pediatrics

I additionally obtained a Master of Science degree in Instructional Systems Design from the University of Kentucky and a Master of Public Health degree from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

1. Educate Yourself



The more you know about your diabetes the more you can partner and be an active participant in your diabetes care. If you do not already know the best places to get information about your diabetes than ask your doctor for an information prescription!

Have you ever left your doctor's office feeling confused? Do all the different instructions for your diabetes frustrate you? Do you worry you are not taking your medications correctly?

If you answered 'yes' to any of these questions, then this guide is for you. We will provide tips and techniques to improve clear communication that will help you understand what you need to know and what you need to do to get your diabetes under control. Becoming an informed and involved patient is the key.

2. Information Rx



If you have ever wondered where to look for health information, you are not alone. Many people just go to Google and do a search. However, you have no idea what exactly you are getting- Is it credible? Does this apply to me?

An Information Prescription may help. When you see your diabetes doctor, they give you a prescription that you take to your pharmacy, and you begin taking your medication. Why not ask for an information prescription?

An information prescription is you asking your doctor to directly refer you to a specific place on the Internet (or other source) to find credible and useful information about your diabetes. One such site is [Medline Plus](#)- a government website with a wealth of diabetes info.

3. Ask 3 Questions

Clear communication- both from you to your doctor and your doctor to you is essential if you are going to get your diabetes under control. If your doctor is a good communicator, they will display certain characteristics. You may want to check out my article, [Communication With Patients: 10 Signs Your Doctor Is A good Communicator](#).

As a patient, the [Partnership for Clear Health Communication](#) recommends that you ask your doctor and you understand the answer to these 3 question about your diabetes:

What is my main problem?

While you may know that your diabetes is not as well controlled as you might like, but do you know why? AM I taking my medications correctly? Do I need to avoid certain foods at certain times of the day? Are there easy substitutes that I am not aware of? If you don't know the problem, it is difficult to do anything about it.



What do I need to do?

Once you understand your problem, you can begin to do something about it. Asking your doctor “What do I need to do?” will provide you concrete next action steps and will not allow your doctor to assume you know what to do. If you do not understand than make sure you ask. Subsequent tips will help you take steps if you do not understand.

Why is it important for me to do this?

It is in our human nature to put things off, especially if you do not know why you are doing something. If you do not understand why a recommendation or some aspect of your diabetes care is important, you are not likely to achieve good diabetes control.



If you ask these 3 questions of your doctor, you will be on your way to better diabetes control.

Source: Ask Me 3. [National Patient Safety Foundation and The Partnership for Clear Health Communication.](#)

4. I Still Don't Understand



What if I ask the 3 questions and still don't understand? It may not be clear to your doctor that you do not understand. If you do not understand your new medication or instructions, you could end up back in the office or the hospital. You could use the following suggestions to get more explanation from your doctor:

- “So you want me to ...”- This will make sure your understanding and your doctor's are the same.
- “I want to make sure I understand” and repeat the information back. The doctor will then confirm or correct what you said.
- “This is all new information, can we go over it again to make sure I understand?”

While your doctor is really busy and they want you to understand what you need to know and do, they may just need some prompting.

5. Review

Look at your blood sugar records

Always bring your blood sugar record with you to your office visit. Reviewing before you go and anticipate questions your doctor may ask like “why do you think you had really good control here, but not at this other time.” See if there are any patterns you want to ask your doctor about or any significant events like hypoglycemia.



Other problems

Diabetes is a complicated disease that affects many aspects of your life. Consider discussing the following with your doctor if they affect you:

- Feelings of sadness or depression
- Pain or tingling in the feet
- Sexual problems
- Appetite changes

Be proactive in preventing complications

Diabetes requires you monitor and prevent complications. As a result, there are many maintenance activities you should discuss with your doctor like:

- Did you see an eye doctor in the last year?
- What is my cholesterol?
- What is my blood pressure?
- Do I need to take a daily aspirin?
- What is my A1c and microalbumin?

6. Other Quick Tips



Bring Your Medications

Your doctor needs to know **all** of your medications to make recommendations and avoid side effects.



Make A List

A list will help you make sure all of your questions and concerns are addressed.



[Photo Victor1558](#)

Bring A Family Member

A second pair of ears can make sure that you understand after leaving the office.



[Photo safebeat](#)

Ask A Pharmacist

When you go to pick up your prescription, ask your pharmacist to review all medications to make sure there are no potential drug reactions.

Thanks



I hope you enjoyed the guide. If you found the guide useful than you will probably enjoy the content at www.diabetesplan.org.

Please go to the site and give me any feedback about what you liked, didn't, or let your friends know about the site and the guide.