

THE CLINICIAN'S CORNER

Making the Best of Your Doctor Appointment

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Making your doctor's appointment more productive takes a little work but will help your physician help you maintain better control of your seizures. There are a number of things you can do.

First and foremost, be prepared for your appointment. Think about what has occurred since you last saw your physician. Have you had any seizures? If so, how many? What were they like? One very important tool is keeping a seizure calendar. The calendar will give you and your physician a clear picture of exactly how many seizures you have had. Medication changes, sleep deprivation, menstrual periods, illnesses and other events that may be significant should also be included on the calendar. These factors are all important in assessing your response to medications.

Your physician will also want to know about any side effects that may have occurred. Having thought about these or writing them down also is helpful.

Your physician will want to know any medications you are taking, including doses and frequency. A written list of all your medications should be brought with you, including both anti-seizure drugs and non-seizure medications. An excellent idea is to carry this list with you at all times in case you find yourself unexpectedly in an emergency room or doctor's office. The doses and frequency should be listed, particularly when changes are being made in your medications. Alternately, the medications bottles can be brought. With the many generic medications and different manufacturers, simply showing your doctor the pill itself may not allow identification of the medication.

Finally, think of all questions you may have for your doctor. Write the questions down and review them before the appointment so you will be able to clearly express your concerns. Let your doctor know early in the visit that you have questions so that there will be enough time to answer them fully. Most doctors welcome any questions, but being given a list of concerns as the doctor feels the visit is complete or is walking out the door is often counterproductive. Giving the doctor the list may also be helpful. The office visit is the time set aside to deal with questions. Telephone calls should be reserved for emergencies, if at all possible.

Being prepared for your appointment may take some time and effort, but will make the routine office visit a more productive and enjoyable experience for both you and your physician.