Preparing for MS Doctors Appointments

by MARLENE WALLACE

Optimizing Your MS Doctors Appointments

You should treat appointments with your family doctor and/or specialist(s) in much the same way you would a business meeting. Thus, it is very important to go in well prepared. No doubt, you make a list of relevant questions before going to meetings with your lawyer, accountant and/or real estate agent. So, getting your questions and concerns organized before going to see your doctor makes perfect sense as well.

Get Prepared

The following are a few suggestions for getting prepared for your MS appointments:

- **Always keep your family doctor and specialist up-to-date:** Jot down how you have been feeling lately as well as what has been happening to you since your last visit. Include relevant information concerning the ways your MS symptoms are affecting you both physically and emotionally. Make note of anything that you feel might be of importance. This includes things such as adjustments to your overall lifestyle, changes in your diet and/or exercise program as well as any supplements you have started to take. Inform your doctor and/or neurologist about any alternative treatment providers you see (e.g. chiropractor, acupuncturist and/or massage therapist).
- **Decide where you want to make improvements:** List anything that you specifically want to improve concerning your health. As an example, let your doctor know if you have been having trouble sleeping at night; a medication adjustment may be all that is required to help relieve your sleeping problems. If you do not tell your doctor things like this, he or she will never know.
- **List any questions:** List all of your questions regardless of how trivial they may seem. There is absolutely no health question that you should be afraid to ask your doctor. This includes questions that could potentially be embarrassing but are nonetheless important. Your doctor has probably seen and heard pretty much everything over the years that they've been practicing medicine. However, always ensure that you prioritize your questions so that the most important ones are addressed first, in case you run out of time.

- **Arrange for an additional note taker or listener:** It is recommended that you arrange for a friend or family member to come along to all of your appointments. Not only can your chaperone help you take notes, they can also help you remember questions as well as give you much-needed support and courage to ask those difficult questions. Often, family members can make valuable contributions to the conversation. If you must go to an appointment on your own, always take a pen and paper with you to jot down any important details. NEVER hesitate to ask for clarification of important information if you do not understand what is being said to you. Your chaperone can also help with this.
- **Give yourself a quick "pep talk" beforehand:** Regardless of whether you tend to get anxious about going to doctors' appointments or you feel totally relaxed and at ease talking with your doctor(s), tell yourself that this is YOUR opportunity to really do something positive about your own health and medical condition. Neither your family doctor nor your neurologist knows exactly what is happening with your MS

symptoms, outside of their offices, unless you let them know. They may be doctors but they are not mind readers!

- **Additional information:** Examples of additional information that you may want to take to your appointments to ask your doctor about can include any Internet research you have done and/or information concerning a multiple sclerosis clinical trial you may qualify to participate in.

See the infographic below for a breakdown of how MS doctors appointments usually go.

Inforgraphic from Verilogue