



Making the Most of Your Doctor Visit

Because the visit with your Asthma and Allergy Center doctor is the best time to learn about your asthma, you want to make sure you are prepared. By planning ahead and being prepared, you are less likely to forget your important questions.

Being able to talk with your Asthma and Allergy Center doctor is a big step in managing your asthma. Good communication allows you to take charge of your health and work with your Asthma & Allergy Center doctor to develop the best asthma treatment plan for you. It is your right to know about your health and to understand your asthma. Therefore, you should take responsibility for making sure that you and your Asthma & Allergy Center doctor work together as a team by:

1. Giving clear information to your Asthma & Allergy Center doctor about your signs and symptoms.
2. Listening closely and carefully to the instructions your Asthma & Allergy Center doctor gives you.
3. Asking questions if there is something you do not understand.

Each office visit or telephone conversation should be a great learning experience. Please prepare for each encounter by writing down all the instructions and review them whenever you need to. You and your Asthma & Allergy Center doctor are a team, working together to better manage your asthma. It will be easier for you to do this if you keep in mind the following points when you talk with him/her:

YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

Taking an active role in your health care means understanding and agreeing to the instructions that your Asthma & Allergy Center doctor or his/her staff gives you about your asthma treatment. Make sure you know exactly what you should do, how to do it, and for how long. In addition, know when to see your Asthma & Allergy Center doctor for routine visits, as well as for urgent ones. If your asthma symptoms are getting worse, do not wait for your next routine visit. Call your Asthma & Allergy Center doctor as soon as possible.

UNDERSTAND YOUR TREATMENT PLAN

In order to benefit most from a treatment plan, you must understand it. You should know when and how to take your medications to help you manage your asthma more effectively. You should know what triggers your asthma and how to avoid those triggers when possible. Finally, you should work with your Asthma & Allergy Center doctor to develop an emergency plan and know when and how to use it. If you are unable to follow your asthma treatment plan, tell your Asthma & Allergy Center doctor; there may be another option that works for you.

PREPARING FOR YOUR NEXT VISIT

As you prepare for your next office visit, here are a few points to help you and your Asthma & Allergy Center doctor develop that best treatment plan for you. Talk to your Asthma & Allergy Center doctor about:

1. What type of symptoms you have and how long they have lasted.
2. What causes your asthma symptoms.
3. What types of medicine you take.
4. Whether you are able to exercise.
5. Whether you sleep through the night.
6. Your peak flow meter readings (if you are currently using one).
7. How your daily life is affected by your asthma.

Most office visits last only a few minutes and if you have prepared questions, you can make the most of this time. Your instructions for medications will be written for you. The nurse will go over these instructions to make sure you understand them correctly. Do not be shy about asking questions . Repeat the instructions on medication use back to your nurse. This ensures the nurse that her message was communicated clearly and the instructions are readily available to review at any time in the future.

At each follow-up visit, update your Asthma & Allergy Center doctor on the above information. Keeping your Asthma & Allergy Center doctor informed about changes in your health is part of being a team.

A telephone call can sometimes help avoid problems. Get all of your information gathered and organized before you phone the office. Take a peak flow meter measurement before you call and keep your phone line open if you are waiting for a return call. Asthma emergencies rarely occur without warning. Call early whenever possible! If your condition is getting worse, call the office. Do not wait for your symptoms to reach the crisis stage in the middle of the night. If problems should arise during the night, call the doctor on call. Do not wait until a trip to the emergency room is a must. Follow your written asthma crisis management plan.

BE ASSERTIVE

Because the relationship with your Asthma & Allergy Center doctor is so important, an assertive approach is best when talking to him/her. Being assertive means being positive and polite while insisting on your right to understand your asthma and the treatment your doctor has planned for you. Here are some ideas to help you to be assertive when talking to your Asthma & Allergy Center doctor:

1. Be positive. While you may be upset about your asthma, being positive will help both you and your Asthma & Allergy Center doctor keep an open mind and improve communication.

2. Identify your concerns. Is there something you are worried about or do not understand? Discuss it with your Asthma & Allergy Center doctor.
3. Bring a list of questions with you. Sometimes it is difficult to remember what you want to talk to your Asthma & Allergy Center doctor about. Between appointments, write down your questions and concerns and bring them with you to your next visit.
4. Be Specific. Vague or unclear information makes it more difficult for your Asthma & Allergy Center doctor to develop a treatment plan for you. Give your Asthma & Allergy Center doctor detailed information about your asthma symptoms.
5. Take notes. Writing down what you and your Asthma & Allergy Center doctor talked about makes it easier for you to remember important information about your asthma or your treatment plan.
6. Be honest about your feelings. If your Asthma & Allergy Center doctor recommends something you do not agree with or have no intention of doing, tell him/her. Only by working together will you develop and agree on the best asthma treatment plan for you.
7. Remember that your Asthma & Allergy Center doctor is human. No one has all the right answers, but each member of your health care team can contribute to your overall treatment plan.