

YOUR CONSULTATION

ARTHRITIS ACTION FACTSHEETS



Most of us feel a bit uneasy about speaking to healthcare professionals, especially if we don't understand our symptoms, or might be nervous about test results. However, there are some simple things that you can do to help you get the most from your consultation.

Make a list of the most important things that you want to get from the consultation
GPs only have about 10 minutes to see you, so it is important that you are clear about what you need from your consultation. This could be your main concern about what is wrong, what tests are required, or what you can do to help yourself. If you have a long list of problems, it is best to concentrate on your main worry first and then make another appointment to talk about the other issues. Hospital consultations or appointments with physical therapists will usually be longer, but it is still important that you think about what you wish to get out of your appointment, to make the most of the time available. If you feel that you haven't got what you hoped by the end of the consultation, don't be afraid to ask, or you can ask for a second opinion.

Take a list of your medicines (including things you buy over-the-counter)
GPs will already have a record of what tablets you are taking, but hospitals and physical therapists may not have this information. Some medicines that you can buy over-the-counter including herbal remedies can interact with other medicines, so don't forget to mention these too.

Take someone with you to make notes or help you ask difficult questions
Studies have shown that we can only remember a small part of the information that we are told during a consultation, so it can be helpful to take along a family member or friend, to help us remember what has been said, or ask questions on our behalf. It can also help to make notes during the consultation.

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Ask for a copy of any letters that are being written to your GP or other healthcare professional

After a hospital appointment, your healthcare professional will always write to your GP to explain the plan for your care. You may have a copy of this letter which can help remind you what was said, so don't be afraid to ask, if you wish to receive this.

If you don't understand or can't hear what is being said – ask again!

Healthcare professionals are trained to communicate, so if you can't hear or don't understand what is being said, that is their fault not yours! Don't be afraid to ask them to speak louder or ask them to repeat the explanation. Requesting from your healthcare professional to draw a diagram or use non-medical words may also help you understand better.

There's no need to be nervous

Doctors and healthcare professionals are only human and are doing their job because they want to help, so there's no need to feel nervous about explaining your problems and asking for help.

Ask what you can do to help yourself

Sometimes, some of the simplest advice is the best, for example to rest, do gentle exercise, get some sleep, or to take some painkillers. It can be reassuring to know that you are already doing all you can to help yourself and will not cause yourself any harm.