

Patient Information

What Did the Doctor Say?

ONE OF THE FIRST QUESTIONS YOU PROBABLY ARE ASKED AFTER A VISIT WITH YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER IS, “WHAT DID THE DOCTOR SAY?” BUT, IF YOU ARE LIKE MOST PEOPLE, YOU MAY HAVE TROUBLE ANSWERING YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS OR FRIENDS. SOMETIMES, IT IS BECAUSE THERE IS TOO MUCH INFORMATION TO TAKE IN AT ONE TIME. OTHER TIMES, IT IS BECAUSE YOU DID NOT UNDERSTAND ALL THAT WAS SAID.

If this has happened to you, there is no reason to feel ashamed. Health care providers are often in a hurry and try to tell you a lot in a short time. They may talk fast in an effort to say everything you need to know. Doctors also tend to use words that you may not know. Because these are common words for them to use, they forget that this is not the case for everyone.

There are some things you can do before, during, and after your visit that may make it easier to get the information you need to manage your diabetes.

Before you go:

- Decide what you want to be sure to talk about before you go. Write down any questions you would like to ask, and put the list in a place where you will be sure to take it with you. Tell your provider at the start of the visit that you have questions so there is time to get the answers you need.
- Collect any Web site or newspaper stories you want to ask about. It will be easier if you look at them together.

While you are there:

- If you do not understand a word or phrase that is used, ask your provider to tell you again in “lay-terms.”
- Ask that they speak up if you are having trouble hearing what is said.
- Ask them to slow down if they are speaking too fast for you to take it all in.

- Write down what you need to do or ask that they give it to you in writing so you can take it home.
- Ask if you can repeat back what was said at the end of your visit, to be sure you are clear.
- If tests are ordered, make sure you understand the reason and what will be learned from the test.
- Ask what your test results mean. This is true even if the results are “normal” or “stable.”
- If your test results are described as “negative” or “positive,” ask if that is a good result.
- Bring a family member who can also hear what was said and take notes.
- Bring a tape recorder to your visits.
- Be honest. If you think you will have a problem with any part of your treatment, ask how to handle it. Let your provider know if you think it will not be possible for you to carry it out or if you cannot afford it.
- Ask for a referral to a diabetes educator or dietitian. They often have the time and skills to explain things more clearly.

After your visit:

- When you get your prescriptions filled, ask the pharmacist about your medicines, when to take them, and what to watch out for.
- Call for the results of any tests or to let your provider know if the treatment is not working as you think it should.

Many people are shy about telling health care providers they don't understand or asking them to slow down when giving information. But being clear about the advice you receive is the first step in getting the best possible care and being able to manage your diabetes well.



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