

by Allissa Gaul ND

Getting your healthcare needs met by your various practitioners can be a challenge. But one part preparation plus two parts honesty can make your experience more supportive and fruitful, both in the short term and the long term. I've been in practice for a long time and have had plenty of my own frustrations on the doctoring end with trying to help patients and I have put together my top ideas on how you can help me help you.

### **Number one thing -- tell me everything!**

I can't tell you how many times patients have left out information because they've decided that some issue is not related to what they are concerned about. But that's what history taking is about for the doctor – we're looking for things that you might not realize are related to help us to build a picture of what's going on for you. So if you think that getting your tonsils out at age 6 is not relevant, think again! Having your Medical Records Binder on hand is so handy from an information perspective. This is a free resource from our office that shows you how to make your own binder complete with forms and tabs. (Download available on our website: [www.resonance-wellness.com](http://www.resonance-wellness.com))

Also, I really have heard it all. So don't hesitate to spill the beans and let me in on what is really going on in your life, even the embarrassing stuff.

### **Second: in the interest of time, tell me everything on your mind UP FRONT.**

It can be difficult to take into consideration the things you might tell me at the last minute! Bring a list of questions so that I have a sense of everything you're concerned about from the earliest minutes of your appointment. That way I can make sure to address as much as possible in the time allotted.

### **Third: Be realistic about how much time you need.**

A half hour goes quickly if you have a list of complaints, and we may need to fit in some ART, discussion and planning for further testing or a treatment course. If you have a cold, come for 15 minutes. Anything more than that and you'll probably need 30. If you really need to talk, you can book as much time as you really need. And if we don't use your full time, we can cut the appointment short. Sometimes things don't turn out like what you'd expect and you take a little longer than we have time. That's ok, but it can't be like that all the time because it's not fair on the patients waiting.

If part of the time struggle is that your memory is poor or you get overwhelmed at appointments, bring a friend or family member to help or record what I say. It's ok. You can do that.

### **Fourth: Bring your supplements and drugs for me to take a look at, ideally in the bottle with a legible label.**

If you take anything on a regular basis, actually having some of the tablets or capsules on hand would be great, not just the empty bottle! That way we can test you with ART to see if the supplements all agree with you, and we don't have to guess what is in it. In addition, the more info I have about what you're taking, the more likely I can accurately advise you as to the potential interactions of those items.

### **Fifth: Bring me your googles, if you are concerned about something you've read or potentially think you might suffer from. It's ok.**

Don't suffer with googlitis alone. It is typical for someone with a chronic condition to be very conversant with that condition and what is typical and expected. Your participation in your care may include giving me information that you have come across or recognize in your own health picture. Even if its worrisome or scares you. Share it.



**Sixth: Be honest with me about how much responsibility you can take based on what you think you really can do.**

Participating in lifestyle changes is not always easy. Exercise, diet, habit changes, change in perspective, they all take energy and time to work into. If you're really not willing to change your diet or you really hate swallowing pills, tell me.

**Seventh: If you don't understand your treatment plan or you need to have things go more slowly or if there is a pocket-book concern, let me know.**

I try to make reasonable plans with a low overhead, but there are times when a treatment can get expensive. My preference is to give you lifestyle treatments, but when you feel lousy, sometimes you just need a break from your treatment. In this case, we can start a treatment that is easy but may be costlier in order to work up the courage to make the needed life changes.

**Eighth: If you're not responding and you feel like giving up, tell me first!**

There are ups and downs in recovery and sometimes it can be overwhelming. I take my cue from you how your symptoms are affecting you. And if you did give up 6 months ago, and stopped your treatment plan, and didn't come back and tell me, don't worry. You can come back and we can still make it work for you. No judgment! I have had people come back several years later and admit that they're now really ready to work on something they couldn't work on at the time when we met.

**Ninth: I will give you a suggested time frame for follow up.**

But life can get in the way! If you need to put off your appointment or keep on the same plan for a while before going to your next treatment plan step, just let us know and we'll help you keep the holding pattern until the time works better for you!

In a healthy working relationship, being both doctor or patient is a privilege and is a resource to you over the course of your illness or your lifetime. Working together where we both have your best interest as the focus takes effort, but it is effort that is well rewarded. In my office hangs this poem, of unknown authorship:

*May you find in me the mother of the world  
May my hands be a mother's hands  
My heart be a mother's heart  
May my response to your suffering be a mother's response to your suffering.  
May I sit with you in the dark as a mother sits in the dark.  
May you learn through our relationship that there is something in this world that can be trusted.*

We'll see you soon.