



Doctor Visit Tips

www.acceleratedcure.org

Here is a list of tips for working with the medical provider who is treating your MS. On the next page you will find a checklist that you can print out and take with you to each visit to help you record important information. The last page contains a log that you can fill out in between doctor visits to document health changes and questions you want to ask at the next visit.

First visit with the doctor

When visiting a doctor for the first time, you should work with him or her to develop a strategy for managing your MS. This includes:

- Documenting your current health status (baseline)
- Developing together a list of goals to try to achieve
- Planning steps to reach those goals (treatments and other actions such as exercise), and
- Agreeing on how to measure progress towards those goals.

You should also ask about and record essential details such as how to contact the doctor (especially outside of regular business hours), and what situations call for contacting him or her.

All visits

The checklist on pages 2 and 3 is designed to be brought to your doctor's visit for recording information and providing reminders. Keeping a personal log (page 4) between visits and bringing this to your next visit can also help you make the best use of your time with your doctor. This log should include:

- Notable changes in your symptoms and treatments and when they happened (keep in mind that new symptoms can be due to MS, a drug side effect, or a separate disorder)
- Questions that you have about treatments, symptoms, trials, and anything else your doctor may be able to answer

During your visit, be sure to take notes and ask how to spell words you don't know so you can look them up later. Some people also find it helpful to bring a tape recorder or another person along to help remember what is said. Ask for copies of your medical records, test results, MRI reports and films, etc. This will come in handy if you need to see a specialist or ever decide to change doctors.

Getting a second opinion on diagnosis or important treatment decisions

MS is a complex disease that is not very well understood. No doctor knows everything about MS; therefore getting a second opinion about your diagnosis should not be an insult to his/her abilities, but rather a wise decision. Many diseases can mimic MS and it is best to be certain of your diagnosis. Treatment decisions are also important and may warrant seeking another viewpoint if you're uncertain about the best course of action. Keep in mind that you can see multiple doctors for your MS; you don't have to see only one.

Your relationship with your doctor

With a chronic disease, it is important to have a doctor you can work with for an extended period of time. Doctors are people and you may or may not get along with a specific doctor. Some important questions to ask yourself are:

- Do you feel comfortable with this doctor?
- Is this doctor responsive? Does he/she return calls promptly?
- Does this doctor listen to what you are saying?
- Does what the doctor says make sense to you?

If you don't feel that your doctor is right for you, it is all right to find another one. Having a good working relationship with your doctor is essential to managing your MS.



Doctor Visit Checklist

www.acceleratedcure.org

Doctor's Name: _____ Date of Visit: _____

Contact information

What is the best way to contact the doctor?

- During normal hours
- Weekends, holidays, vacation
- Email

What situations require contacting the doctor again?

MS management plan

Current health status

Overall goals for managing the disease

Plan for measuring progress towards these goals

Treatment

Drug therapy (new or changed):

- Drug name and dose
- Reason for new drug or change of drug
- Instructions (how, when to take the drug, etc.)
- Side effects (and which ones require attention)
- Monitoring tests needed (e.g., liver function)
- Interactions with other drugs, vitamins, herbs
- How to tell if treatment is succeeding or failing
- Plan for evaluating effect of the drug
- Copy of the prescribing information sheet

Non-drug therapy (new or changed):

- Name of therapy
- Reason for new therapy or change in therapy
- Instructions
- Resources for obtaining/using the therapy
- Side effects (and which ones require attention)
- How to tell if treatment is succeeding or failing
- Plan for evaluating effect of the therapy



Doctor Visit Checklist (continued)

www.acceleratedcure.org

Tests

New tests:

- Name of test being ordered/conducted
- Reason for test
- Instructions for test
- Changes in care that may occur based on test results (if none, make sure test is necessary)
- Ask that results of this test be sent to you

Referrals to other care providers (specialists, therapists, other resources)

Referral information:

- Name of provider
- Type of care provided
- Reason for referral
- Contact information

Other topics for discussion

Clinical trials available for participation

New treatment options

Other concerns/problems

Recommended doctors for second opinion (if needed)

Next steps

Other instructions and actions

Date of next follow-up

Get copies of:

- Doctor's notes
- Lab results
- Films (printed out, not just on CD)
