

How People With Diabetes Can Get The Most Out Of A Doctor's Visit



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The diagnosis smacks you square across the face when you hear the doctor say, "You have diabetes." As he starts detailing your course of treatment, the information can sometimes go in one ear and out the other. Your mind starts filling with questions to ask all while trying to make sense of the diagnosis.

But all too often, a busy schedule forces your doctor to hurry off to see another patient and may leave you feeling a little dazed and confused. This type occurrence is happening across the country. Especially for doctors, time equals money, and so they just don't have enough time to meet the demands of the estimated 29 million people living with diabetes, according to the [Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism](#).

Since there is no immediate solution, it is crucial for patients living with diabetes to capitalize on the time with your doctor. By following five simple steps, you can feel confident that you will leave each appointment armed with knowledge for better managing the disease.

1. Know and adhere to pre-appointment requirements.

Every appointment should include some type of blood test - such as a fasting glucose test or a pre-meal test - and could require you to fast up to 10 hours prior. Failing to do so will result in rescheduling the test, taking more of your time and energy and perhaps another office visit co-pay. To avoid making that mistake, call your doctor's office a couple days before your appointment to determine if you need to fast and if there are any other requirements.

2. Document and discuss any changes in your health.

Diabetes is a progressive disease, meaning it can cause other complications if not properly managed. So, it is important to document any symptoms you are experiencing. That way you won't forget anything during your discussion with the doctor. By listing your symptoms, you can

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ensure you and your doctor are on the same page in terms of monitoring and managing any potential complications on the horizon.

3. Take your blood glucose log or meter with you to the doctor's office.

Give it to your doctor or nurse and have the doctor review the history of results and patterns since your last visit. Discuss with your doctor any concerns or questions you have about certain readings or events (a specific meal, activity, etc.).

4. Write down questions for your doctor.

In the same vein as the above, prepare in advance and bring a list of the medications and vitamins you take at home plus any specific questions you have. This organization will help your doctor improve the quality of the time being spent with you. You and your doctor won't feel rushed and you won't forget what to ask. The answers you receive can assist you in better managing your diabetes.

5. Know what should be checked at your appointment

At every office visit you should be weighed, have your blood pressure taken and the soles of your feet examined. You should also have a blood glucose test performed and your medications reviewed and discussed with you. At least twice each year, a HbA1c test should be conducted, and some physicians will do this at each visit. Speak up if some of these are not being performed.

Option: Arrange for a friend or family member to accompany you.

Managing diabetes is no easy feat. Along with the normal stresses of everyday life, you also must manage changing and adhering to a different diet and exercise plan, while also regularly testing blood sugar levels. It can be helpful to bring a friend or family member with you to have a second set of ears in the room to catch anything you may forget or miss. If no one is available, you may consider bringing a recording device to capture the conversation (politely asking permission, of course).

One of the keys to properly managing diabetes is quality physician care. But with doctors battling jam-packed schedules, patients can be left feeling overwhelmed and wanting more consultation. With some prep work prior to your appointment, you can be assured you'll get the most "bang for your buck."

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