

Getting the Most Out of a Visit with Your Doctor

Your visit with an orthopedic surgeon is an important meeting that can be most effective if you plan ahead. It is important that you give your doctor the information he or she needs and that you understand what your doctor is recommending. The following checklist will help you and your doctor discuss the issues most important for getting the most out of the visit.

Before you go

1. Find out the basics about the office. Where is it? What time should you arrive? If you're going to drive, where can you park? Do you need to bring your insurance card or a managed care medical referral?
2. Assemble your records such as results and copies of X-rays, other imaging studies and lab tests and personally take the records to the doctor's office.
3. Make written lists of: **Please note that you may download these forms and complete in advance.**
 - Medications you are taking.
 - Your medical history, such as prior treatments for heart or thyroid problems or operations, even those not related to your current problem.
 - Your concerns about your condition (pains, loss of mobility or function).
4. Consider asking a friend or family member to accompany you. If you need a translator, ask another adult to come with you; don't rely on a child to translate.
5. Dress appropriately. For spine and many problems involving the arms and legs, you may be asked to disrobe. For knee problems, please bring a pair of shorts. Wear loose clothing that's easy to take off and put on.

At the doctor's office

1. Arrive early so you can complete any required forms or tests before meeting with your doctor.
2. Be honest and complete in talking with your doctor. Share your point of view and don't hold back information about issues such as incontinence, memory loss, sex, or other issues that you might consider embarrassing.
3. Take notes on what the doctor tells you, and ask questions if you don't understand the meaning of a word or the instructions for taking medication.
4. Ask what to expect from your treatment, what effect it will have on your daily activities and what you can do to prevent further disability.

5. Ask your doctor for handouts or brochures that you and your family members can review at home. Your doctor may refer you to an Internet web site for more information. You will find great information on our web site at www.frontrangeorthopedics.com .

6. Talk to the other members of the health care team, too, such as nurses, athletic trainers, and medical assistants.

When you get home

1. Review the materials the doctor gave you. If you can't remember something, or if you don't understand your notes, call the office and speak to a member of your health care team.
2. Take the full course of medication and make sure you follow the prescribed diet or exercise routine. Remember, you are a part of your health care team, too.
3. Keep your doctor informed of any changes in your condition.

Questions to ask at the visit or later, if your doctor recommends surgery

- Why is this procedure being recommended? Are there alternatives?
- What are the benefits of this procedure in terms of pain relief and improvement of function and mobility?
- What are the risks involved?
- What is the procedure called? How is it done?
- What percentage of patients improve following the procedure?
- What will happen if I don't have the surgery now?
- If I want a second opinion, whom can I consult?
- How many similar procedures have been done by my doctor (or whoever will perform the procedure)? What are the outcomes?
- Will I need any tests or medical evaluations prior to the surgery?
- What kind of anesthesia will be used?

- What kind of implant or prosthesis will be used? What are the outcomes using this device? How long will it last?
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- How long will the recovery take? Will I need assistance at home afterwards? For how long?
- Will I need physical therapy?
- When can I return to work? When can I drive my car? When can I have sexual activity?
- Are there any written materials or videotapes about this surgery that I can review?

If you decide to go ahead with the surgery, check with your insurance company to see if your coverage requires you to obtain a managed care medical evaluation or clearance before the surgery. You should also verify that the surgery is covered by your policy and find out how your claim will be handled and paid.

Your orthopedist is a medical doctor with extensive training in the diagnosis and nonsurgical and surgical treatment of the musculoskeletal system, including bones, joints, ligaments, tendons, muscles and nerves.