

Communicating with Your Doctor

The most important part of a successful doctor's office visit is clear communication. Try a few easy rules of thumb to make sure you're talking about the right topics, sharing the right information and getting the right help for any brain health or memory concerns you might be having.^{1,2,3,4}

You Can Take Action

The next time you visit your doctor, make a point of talking to them about your brain health and any concerns you're having about memory loss, cognitive decline, or Alzheimer's disease. Here are a few tips to guide the conversation:

Come prepared. Don't wait until you're at the doctor's office to start thinking about the conversation. Before your visit, come up with three or four questions you want to ask, and talk about any health or memory changes you've noticed since your last visit. Perhaps start writing down questions as they come up. Be ready to provide specifics, if you know them, about when the changes started, how often they happen and whether they're getting better or worse. It's also a good idea to bring a list of current medications you're taking (whether for brain health or not).

Be clear and to the point. Doctors often have limited time to spend with each patient. You can help them help you by clearly and concisely asking your most important questions. It's most helpful to be honest with your doctor about your health and habits, even if you think it's not what they want to hear. They're here to help, not judge.

Talk about memory changes affecting your daily life. It's important to mention memory loss or other changes you may be experiencing, especially if they make your day-to-day activities more difficult, like

cooking, shopping, driving, or paying your bills. If your family has mentioned concerns about your memory, you should bring those up with your doctor too.

Discuss, decide and make a plan. You should aim to leave the doctor's office with a clear plan for what to do next. Talk with your doctor about any suggested treatments or lifestyle changes to make sure they meet your needs. Also, ask about any additional changes or symptoms you should be monitoring.

If you feel rushed or confused, slow it down. Just because doctors are busy, that doesn't mean you should leave feeling unclear or unsure of what to do. It's okay to tell your doctor if something is troubling you or not making sense. If it will help, don't hesitate to ask for notes or written information to have a record of all the most important points.

1. <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/infographics/5-ways-make-most-your-doctor-visit>

2. <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/5-ways-get-most-out-your-doctors-visit>

3. <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/what-do-i-need-tell-doctor>

4. <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/discussing-health-decisions-your-doctor>