



Pain Concern is a UK based charity working to help, support and inform people living with pain and healthcare professionals.

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Charity No. SC 023559



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Managing **Medical Appointments**



Make good use of your medical appointments, advises Jacquelyn Watson, nurse specialist at the Glasgow Pain Management Programme.

Attending appointments can cause a lot of stress and anxiety and you can often leave feeling confused and even angry. Let's look at how you can get everything you need from these appointments.

Prepare

Writing down things that you feel are important to discuss is a great idea. When you are in a situation it is easy to forget things or to get sidetracked by just one issue. Put the things that are most important to you at the top as it isn't always possible to get through everything in one appointment.

List Current Medicines

It's always a good idea to take a list of your current medicines. Don't rely on health professionals having that information as it isn't always sent to them when you are referred. This list can save lots of time, which you can use to ask questions and share information.

Remember, your last repeat prescription may not be up to date so check before you go.

Your Appointment

The purpose of the appointment is for you to voice any concerns and issues and for the health professional to get a clear understanding of where things are with you. If you are uncomfortable

with other people being present, such as medical students, it is perfectly acceptable to ask them to go. They will not mind at all – they may be glad to get a coffee!

Don't get aggressive- that will upset you and prevent you getting your points across. Also, the health professional may not concentrate on what you are saying but how you are saying it. Stick to what you want to get across and be ready to repeat your message until it gets through. Don't be put off, but try to remain calm and polite, even if those around you may be a little brusque!

Do You Need More Time?

Arranging double appointments is often possible, especially with GPs. The extra time can stop you feeling overwhelmed by all the things you need to discuss in the short space of a single appointment. But remember, getting two appointments together may mean you have to wait longer to see your GP.

Take A Friend

Having someone else there with you can often help, as they can remind you of what you want to discuss and they often remember things afterwards which you have not taken in. Make sure to choose someone you trust and who isn't going to take over YOUR appointment.



Write It Down

If you don't have someone with you who can jot things down, ask the health professional to make a note of key things, for example, changes to medication, different treatments, names of diagnoses, or of other health professionals. Many clinics now provide written information on your plan of treatment to take home with you.

Make your own notes as well, just to remind yourself of what has been said. Checking your notes is a good way of remembering your previous appointment before a new one, especially when it may have been months since your last consultation and lots may have changed. This helps you to update your health professional quickly, and gives you more time to discuss the important points.

Fill It In

Pain clinics are notorious for asking you to complete lots of questionnaires! Although these take time and it can be difficult to see their relevance, they do give health professionals important information allowing them to assess your needs

quickly and direct your consultation appropriately. This information is also used for research, enabling us all to gain a better understanding of chronic pain and its effects. So please persevere!

Remember

At clinics things do not always run smoothly. Notes may not be available or clinics may run late. This is equally frustrating for the staff at the clinics and not always a result of something within their control.

It is really important to remember that health professionals have different specialisms. If you feel they ignored or discounted something that was important to you, it may just mean it is not their area of expertise and they don't feel able to advise you on that issue. Also, medicine in general has its limitations. The health professional may be an expert but many things can't be resolved or solved and they may not have the answer. It is not that they are keeping information from you, but simply that they don't have that information.