THE CARE PARTNER PROJECT

Preview Safe & Sound™ Checklists

Manage Communication with Doctors

Contact us for more information or to subscribe:
Karen.Curtiss@CarePartnerProject.org | 847.208.6074

YOUR LOGO

Don't be afraid to speak up for "plain speak!"

If your doctor uses medical terms you don't understand, simply say so. Don't stop asking questions until you feel confident that you understand what they are telling you. You don't want to leave any meeting with your doctor feeling confused or bewildered about your health!

Invite someone to go with you.

Studies show that patients forget a lot of what their doctors say (completely normal!) These conversations are packed with lots of good info. Someone at your side, or by FaceTime, can take notes or help you remember your agenda. Nothing missed!

PREPARE FOR EVERY MEETING WITH YOUR DOCTOR:

A little prep before your doctor appointment—office or online telehealth—can make all the difference in your quality of care. Regardless of the type of appointment, make every minute count! Take time to prepare:

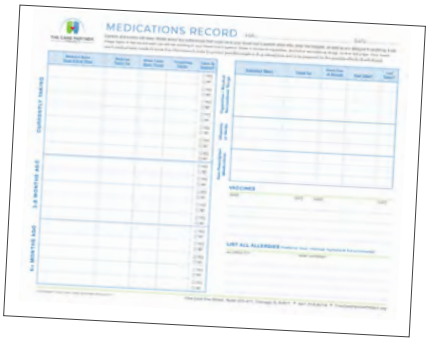
☐ **A written agenda:**

- Your goals for meeting (in priority order).
- Your questions and concerns (in priority).
- Notes on how you feel physically and emotionally.

You can email this agenda to your doctor in advance or upload to their portal, if you wish. Call the office to let them know your agenda is there.

Make copies to take with you—for yourself, the doctor, and anyone who goes with you.

☐ **A list of all current and recent medications:**



- Prescription medicines.
- Non-prescription medicines.
- Vitamins and supplements.
- Herbal remedies.
- Vaccination history.
- Details of tobacco, alcohol, or recreational drug use.

Download our Medications Record form to make keeping track of your medications a cinch.

☐ **Your medical history:**

- Chronic/ongoing medical conditions or symptoms.
- Hospitalizations (why, date, and outcome).
- Surgeries (type, date, and outcome).
- Allergies.

This information may be on your electronic portal. However, it is always a good idea to have it at your fingertips. Your doctor may not have had time to review it before meeting with you – and portals can have errors! (Check your portal regularly and make sure errors are corrected.)

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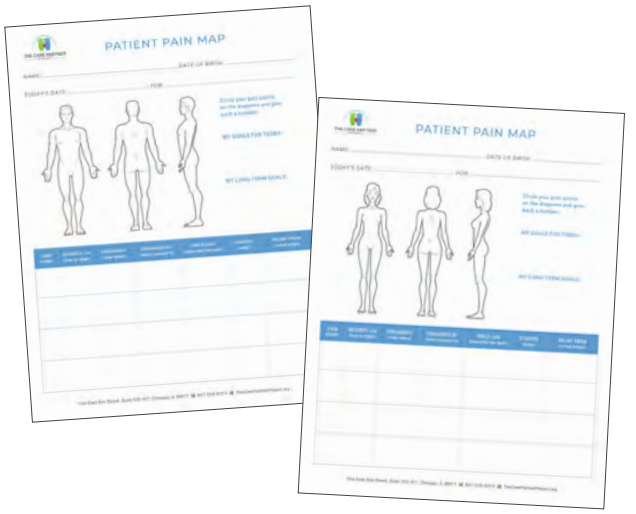
☐ **Your pain map:**

- Download our Pain Map form to help you "plot" your pain symptoms.



- Using this tool will help give your doctor a clearer understanding of your pain, including:

1. Severity and frequency.
2. Triggers.
3. What it feels like.
4. When it started.
5. What provides relief.

☐ **Name and phone of your pharmacy.**

☐ **Calendar to record appointment(s).**

☐ **Pen and paper for notes.**

NOTES:

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HOW TO HELP

PREPARE FOR A TELEHEALTH MEETING WITH YOUR DOCTOR:

IS TELEHEALTH RIGHT FOR YOU?

When telehealth might be your best option:

- Will it takes weeks or months to see your doctor?
- Worried about spreading your germs – or picking up others'—in a doctor's waiting room?
- Short on time or patience with traffic?

NOTE: Sometimes it's possible to get a telehealth sooner than an in-office appointment. Your doctor's call, of course!

When telehealth might NOT be your best option:

- Your doctor needs to perform a physical exam.
- You're most comfortable with in-person meetings.
- You are uncomfortable with the technology involved.
- Your home doesn't have a strong or reliable wifi signal.
- You're concerned about internet security or other privacy issues.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR YOUR TELEHEALTH APPOINTMENT:

A little prep before your doctor appointment—in office or by telehealth—can make all the difference in your quality of care. Regardless of the type of appointment, make every minute count! Take time to prepare:

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Provide your agenda to anyone you ask to join you in meeting with your doctor.

☐ **A list of all current and recent medications:**

- Prescription medicines.
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- Vitamins and supplements.
- Herbal remedies.
- Vaccination history.
- Details of tobacco, alcohol, or recreational drug use.

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☐ **Thermometer and any other home medical devices.**

☐ **Your medical history:**

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- Hospitalizations (why, date, and outcome).
- Surgeries (type, date, and outcome).
- Allergies.

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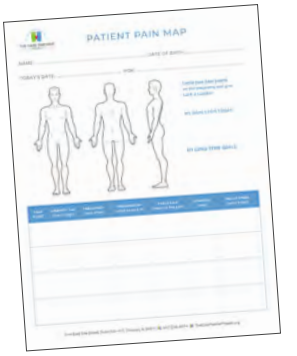

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☐ **Pen and paper for notes.**

FOR YOUR TELEHEALTH APPOINTMENT:

In addition to all prep you need for an office meeting with your doctor, your online meeting requires a few more steps:

☐ **Find a quiet place for your meeting.**

☐ **Make sure you have good lighting** (so the doctor can see your skin tone—a gauge of your health).

☐ **Test your technology.**

- Internet, computer, sound—leave no room for Murphy's Law!
- Test the meeting login your doctor's office provides right away.

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YOUR LOGO

Little known fact: *up to 40% of diagnoses are incorrect. That's why it's so important to ask a lot of questions and see at least two different doctors for information and treatment choices.*

Getting the right diagnosis *is often like solving a mystery, and it's really up to the patient and their Care Partner to dig for clues and answers. It can take lots of doctor visits and lots of research, but it's worth the time and effort.*

Patients often worry *that they will offend their main doctors if they get second or third opinions. This concern is common and understandable, but here's the truth: good doctors encourage their patients to collect as much information as they can —they know from experience that the more information, the better any health care decisions.*

Don't give up—remember, two heads are better than one!

(And if your doctor is not on board with your getting different opinions, maybe it's time to give up on that doctor!)

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HOW TO HELP

CONFIRM YOUR DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT OPTIONS:

The following questions cover important topics. Add your own! Be sure to ask the same questions of every doctor to compare "apples to apples."

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

☐ **What does my diagnosis mean?**
(What is my problem? What do I have?)

- Ask for the "medical name," and then for a "regular way" to describe it.
- What else could it be?

☐ **How serious is this condition?**
On a 1-5 scale with "1" being "No worries, easy to treat/cure/live with" and a "5" meaning it's "life threatening and must be treated immediately."

- Why? What is your reasoning?

☐ **How would you treat me** for this condition?

☐ **What other ways** are used to treat this condition?

☐ **What are the benefits** of each way to treat this condition?

☐ **What are the risks** or complications for each way to treat my condition?

- How common are the risks and complications?
- What are the immediate, medium-term, and long-term side effects?

☐ **Are there other discomforts** associated with the treatments?

- Are these permanent or temporary?
- How can these discomforts be treated?

☐ **How long will treatment last?**

☐ **How long** before I can get back to my normal activities?

☐ **What is my short-item outlook post-treatment?**

☐ **Are there long-term concerns** or effects of this condition and treatment?

☐ **What are my costs?**

☐ **What are my options** if I can't afford treatment?

Nothing in life prepares your patients and their loved ones to manage a serious illness. Safe & Sound™ resources express your empathy and commitment to care that meets patients where they are.

Together, you are prepared to partner for patient-centered care.

Ready to partner for patients? Let's talk!

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