

Getting the Most From Your Health Care Visits

If you've ever left a doctor's appointment feeling like you still have questions, you're not alone. It's important for you to communicate how you're feeling, express your concerns, and ask questions to manage your sickle cell disease (SCD). **Below are tips to help you get the most out of your office visits.**



BEFORE

- **Think** about the questions, you have. Prepare a list of questions in advance, starting with the most important ones.¹
- **Keep** a file of paperwork, including test results, imaging reports, and list of medicines.¹
- **Organize** your thoughts, questions, trackers, and paperwork in a notebook or folder that you can bring to your appointment. You can also store information electronically (eg. you may want to take photos of your medical records, tests, etc. and store all of this information on your phone or tablet)
- **Ask** someone to come with you to the appointment, if you feel that would be helpful.



DURING

- **Start** the appointment by telling your doctor and health care team the things you want to discuss.
- **Ask** questions and raise any concerns that you have.
- **Take** notes throughout the conversation or ask your provider to write a few points down. You can also take notes on your phone. These notes can be helpful, especially if you want to research something at home.
- **Repeat** back what you just heard to make sure you understand what you need to do after the visit.



AFTER

- **Follow** up on your doctor's and health care team's instructions, such as making your next appointment or filling prescriptions.
- **Continue** to track how you are feeling or any other questions for your next appointment.
- **Call** your health care provider if you have any problems or pain crises in between visits.



For more information on managing SCD, go to [NotAloneinSickleCell.com](https://www.NotAloneinSickleCell.com). Remember to talk with your health care provider about any questions you may have.

1. National Cancer Institute. Support for People with Cancer: Coping with Advanced Cancer (2014). <https://www.cancer.gov/publications/patient-education/advancedcancer.pdf>. Accessed May 18, 2018.

Sample Questions to Ask Your Doctor

Prepare to have honest conversations with your doctor about your concerns. Think ahead of time about the questions you might want to ask. **Use this list to help you get started or create your own:**

MANAGING SCD

- I would like to make a plan for overall health maintenance to prevent additional illnesses. How do I get started?
- What can I do now to prevent future SCD health problems?

UNDERSTANDING TREATMENT

- What kind of results can I expect with treatment?
- Are there any side effects of this treatment?
- How long will I need to be on this treatment?

GETTING SUPPORT

- Where can I get help with stress, anxiety or sadness?
- Are there support groups or patient advocacy groups that you would recommend?
- What other information is available to help me learn more?

Other: (write your questions here) _____



Tip: Remember to ask your doctor about treatments. Learning about the different options available can help you to be better informed when discussing possible treatment options together.