

Preparing for a Medical Appointment

BEFORE THE APPOINTMENT

- » **Schedule the appointment at a time that works well for everyone involved.**
- » **Fill out the Medical Appointment Worksheet** on page 62.
- » **The medical team will be better able to care for the person with Parkinson's if you are prepared for the appointment.** Think about (and write down) specific concerns you want to discuss with the doctor:
 - Bothersome motor symptoms, such as tremor, slowness, stiffness, balance/falls
 - Bothersome non-motor symptoms, such as mood, thinking changes, dizziness, sleep, constipation or pain
- » **List any medical changes since the last appointment.** Was there a hospitalization or emergency room visit? Was there a surgery or procedure?
- » If your loved one has had deep brain stimulation (DBS) surgery for Parkinson's, **is programming or a battery analysis needed?** This may require a separate appointment with a DBS programmer.
- » If your loved one has had changes in walking, ability to complete day-to-day cares and activities, voice volume or swallowing, **an appointment with a rehab therapist** (physical, occupational or speech therapist) may be needed.
 - If your clinic has rehab therapists on-site, call the doctor's office to see if a therapy appointment can be made for the same day as the medical appointment.
 - If there is no rehab therapist on-site, you will need a referral for insurance coverage. Add this to your list of topics to bring up with the doctor.
- » **Do you have questions about which exercise program is right for the person with Parkinson's?** Ask for a referral to a physical therapist who can tailor an exercise program for the person with Parkinson's.
- » **Note any changes to the living situation.**
- » **Check prescription bottles for needed refills.**

THE DAY BEFORE AND DAY OF THE APPOINTMENT

» Assemble the following items to bring to the appointment:

- Current medication list; include all prescription and over-the-counter medications and supplements (including strengths and doses)
- Insurance cards and ID
- Pill box (so medications can be given while away from home)

» If you want a letter from the visit to go to your loved one's primary doctor, **bring the name and address of the doctor** and clinic.

» **Plan to attend the appointment with your loved one.** It is helpful to have another person present to share observations, hear and understand the information discussed and take notes.

» **Get to the appointment on time, even early.** Make sure there is enough time to visit the restroom before the appointment.

DURING THE APPOINTMENT

» **Write notes and answers to questions.**

» **Be honest when answering questions,** even if the answers are difficult.

» **Understand the recommendations** and follow-up plans before you leave. If something is unclear, ask the doctor for clarification.

» **Make sure you get information about any new medications** that are prescribed:

- What is the name of the medication?
- What is the medication being prescribed for? Is it to replace another medication or to be taken in addition to other medications?
- What is the dose, and how often is it to be taken? (Many anti-Parkinson medications are increased gradually to avoid side effects. Make sure you write down the dosing schedule precisely.)
- When and how will you know if the medicine is working?
- Are there common or serious side effects to watch for?

» **Understand who you should call with questions, concerns or updates.**

» **Try to schedule the next appointment** or additional team appointments before leaving the office.