

# PREPARING FOR MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS

Coming prepared is an important step in managing your medical appointments to gain the most from these visits.

## COMPLETE PAPERWORK AHEAD OF TIME

Have your caregiver accompany you to your medical appointments when possible. Your primary escort can help you remember details during and after your clinic appointments, and provide moral support. Being present at your clinic visits also helps your caregiver to understand your disease better, empowering them to better advocate for you in emergency situations.

## CREATE A RECORD OF YOUR MEDICAL INFORMATION

Call your health care provider and ask them to mail or e-mail any paperwork you need to fill out ahead of time. This will give you time to complete the forms. Make two copies: one for your appointment and the other for your own medical information record.

If you are unable to get the paperwork in advance, bring your record of medical information with you to assist you to fill out the form completely and accurately. Ask the clinic to give you a copy for your records.

Keeping a record of your medical information in one place (file, binder) can help you to keep track of your treatment plan and reduce your stress in preparing for your appointments.

Your record should include:

- A list of all your health care providers and how to contact them: doctors, dentist, therapists, etc.
- Information on all your current medications such as: name of medication, dose, frequency, who prescribed it, why you are taking the medication and when you started (if possible, you should bring all your medications in their original containers to your appointment)
- Information on other treatments you may be trying, including: dietary regiment, vitamins, other non-prescribed supplements, alternative therapies, etc.
- A copy of your medical records
- Copies of tests and lab results

You can add a notebook to jot down notes or list questions.

MAKE A LIST OF QUESTIONS

Writing down your questions to ask your medical team at your next appointment will help ensure you remember them.  
Questions you may want to ask:

ABOUT TESTS & PROCEDURES

- What will the results of this test or procedure tell you?
- What does the test or procedure involve?
- What are the potential risks of this test or procedure?

ABOUT MEDICATIONS

- Why are you prescribing this medication to me?
- How does this medication work to improve my health?
- What are the side effects of this medication?

ABOUT APPOINTMENTS

- How often should I see you?
- What changes should I make to my diet, exercise routine or lifestyle?

Write down questions as they occur to you during your day so you do not forget them.  
Do not be afraid to ask for more explanation if you don't fully understand the information provided.



YOU ARE YOUR OWN BEST ADVOCATE

The members of your healthcare treatment team are medical experts in scleroderma, but you know your body best.  
Don't be afraid to ask for explanations or seek a second opinion.  
Don't be afraid to tell your doctor or clinic nurse about how you are feeling.  
You are your own best advocate! Being informed and prepared will empower you to take charge of your well-being, communicate effectively with your medical team and ensure that your needs are met.



LEARN MORE

Educate yourself about scleroderma

Knowing more about the disease is key to understanding what's happening to your body. Scleroderma Canada and your local scleroderma group can provide educational resources in print and electronically to help you understand more about scleroderma.

Learn more about your treatment plan

Ask your treatment team about what information is relevant for you. Ask them to provide resources.

We would like to thank **Dr. Evelyn Sutton, MD, FRCPC, FACP** for her assistance with this information pamphlet.