

# VISITING YOUR DOCTOR



**Have you ever walked out from visiting your doctor feeling that you haven't quite understood everything he or she has said? Do you sometimes want to ask the doctor a question - but decide not to because you think he or she is too busy or you don't feel comfortable asking the question?**

These are common areas of concern to a lot of people - here's some ways on how to deal more confidently with your doctor.

## ***Choose your doctor carefully.***

*Things to consider when you choose a doctor are:*

- Do you feel comfortable talking with the doctor about your health?
- Does the doctor talk to you in a way that you can understand?
- Does he or she treat you with respect and take your health concerns seriously?

## ***What to do before you visit your doctor.***

You'll get more out of your consultation with a doctor, (or any other health professional) if you think about what you want to say first. It's a good idea to write down a list of the questions you need to ask, or any symptoms you want to mention-don't worry if some of the symptoms seem either very vague or as if they

have nothing to do with your epilepsy-they may provide important clues to help the doctor find out what is wrong. If you need moral support during the visit, ask a friend or relative to go with you.

### ***At the Doctor's.***

It's sometimes a good idea to take a notebook and pen along with you-if the doctor gives you a lot of information about your epilepsy, it may help to write it down. If the doctor suggests certain treatments or tests, remember that you don't need to decide immediately whether or not to have them. You can take time to think things over.

### ***If the doctor prescribes medication.***

If you are prescribed medication, it's important to know as much about it as possible.

Useful questions to ask are:

- How and when should I take it?
- Are there food or drinks that I should not take with it?
- Will my other medicines have a bad effect with it?
- Are there any activities I should not do when I take it?
- How should I store it?
- Are there likely to be side effects and how likely are they?
- Is there anything I can do to reduce the side effects?
- What should I do if I have side effects?
- Does it matter if I miss a dose? What should I do if I miss a dose?
- Can you give me any information about the medicine?
- If I have a problem that might affect how or whether I can take the medicine, what should I do?
- How long will I have to take the medication for?

### ***What if the doctor says you need a test?***

Useful questions to ask include:

- What is the test for?
- How is it done and what do I have to do?
- How much will it cost?
- When can I find out the results of a test?

***To greatly assist in comparing treatments and deciding what is right for you, ask yourself a series of questions:***

- What could happen if I did nothing at all?
- What treatment or intervention choices are available to me?
- What are the possible risks and benefits of the different choices?
- How do the benefits and risks weigh up for me?
- Have I now gathered enough information to make my decision?

### ***Understand your diagnosis***

If you have been diagnosed with epilepsy, it is important that you understand what this means and why the diagnosis has been made. Choose a doctor who you are comfortable talking to. You should feel you could discuss any concerns freely, so that you can work together to find a treatment program that suits you. If you understand your epilepsy, you will also be able to make informed decisions about your lifestyle.

### ***I've tried hard, but my doctor doesn't listen to my concerns. What should I do?***

Many people report this. If your questions or concerns don't get answered in a way that is helpful to you, ask them again. Be clear and specific about your concerns. Give your doctor a chance to respond but if it doesn't work, don't hesitate to ask for a second opinion or to find another health care professional to work with you. If you do want another opinion or you wish to change your doctor, you shouldn't feel guilty about this. The Epilepsy Centre can give you a list of neurologists who specialise in the care of people who have seizures.

**For more information on talking to your doctor or if you need support in finding a doctor or visiting your doctor, contact Mark Francis at the Epilepsy Centre on 1300 850 081.**

***One of the simplest things you can do to get the best medical care is develop a good relationship with your doctor.:***

- Take an active role in treatment decisions -- Don't wait to be questioned about how you are doing.
- If you have questions or concerns at any time, call your doctor's office.
- Keep asking until you're sure you understand the answers.
- Make a list of questions to ask at office visits or during phone calls.
- Keep a list of notes so you can keep track of questions, concerns, observations and answers given by the doctor.
- Tell the doctor what other medicines you are taking. That includes non- prescription products like aspirin and allergy medicines. It also includes herbal products, vitamins or dietary supplements. Some of these products can interact with prescription medicines and cause problems.

