

[IMAGE]

## 6 Questions to Ask Your Medical Doctor

By Editorial Staff

### **Q: What is my diagnosis and what does it mean?**

Hard to believe, but some medical doctors don't even tell the patient what's wrong with them; they just prescribe a medication or schedule a test, pat them on the shoulder and send them on their way. When your doctor's completed their examination, ask them what the problem is. If your doctor offers a diagnosis ("It's gallstones"), ask them what that means. Make sure they're specific; you deserve to know what's going on in your body and how your doctor plans on helping you to get better.

### **Q: What is the primary cause of my health condition?**

Your doctor might not always be able to pinpoint a specific cause of your health issue, but they can at least offer a range of potential causes that will give you a frame of reference. Again, you deserve to know. It's also important information because you may be able to provide insight that will aid in your treatment. For example, is your abdominal pain related to an athletic injury, a spicy food you recently ate, or a medication you've been taking for another condition? Knowledge is indeed power for both you and your doctor.

### **Q: How will medication help my condition, and can I do something instead of (or in addition to) taking drugs?**

Prescription drugs - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Medical doctors prescribe medication at alarming rates; in many cases that's their first choice for most patient complaints. You need to know how a medication is supposed to help your condition; don't let your doctor prescribe something without understanding its action on the body, both good and bad. Considering the side effects associated with over-the-counter and prescription medications (a reality emphasized by recent massive recalls of children's cold and cough products), you also should ask your doctor about nondrug treatment options.

### **Q: I'm also taking nutritional supplements. How could they interact with the medication you've prescribed?**

Millions of people take nutritional supplements, whether a daily multivitamin/multimineral or specific nutrients such as B vitamins, vitamin D, calcium or magnesium. Doctors rarely inquire about such use, and remarkably, patients rarely tell them. That's dangerous because many medications can interact with nutritional supplements, which can impact how well (or poorly) your medication addresses your health issue.

**Q: Is there a generic version of this drug available?**

If a medication seems like the only option, at least make sure it doesn't cost you house and home. It's not uncommon for doctors to prescribe the brand-name version of a drug - sometimes because the pharmaceutical rep just dropped off some samples at the office. Generic versions use the same active ingredients as the brand-name versions, are approved by the FDA, and of course, they come at a much lower price. That's particularly important if your insurance doesn't cover the drug and/or you need to take it long-term.

**Q: What is the next step if my condition does not improve within X number of days?**

This is always a great question to ask. Patients are worried about their health to begin with; they want to feel as if their doctor "has a plan" if the first treatment option doesn't seem to be working. Will they try another medication? Will they order blood work? Will they schedule a CT scan? Will we "wait and see"? Knowing what your doctor is thinking and understanding your potential course of care reduces stress, pure and simple, which is always a good thing.

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