

## Quick Guide to Interacting with Your Doctor

*A short guide from the Scleroderma Research Foundation to help you advocate for yourself in the doctor's office.*

### Tips for Advocating for Your Health at the Doctor's Office

Advocating for your health at the doctor's office is an important skill that can help ensure you receive the best possible care. Here are some steps you can take to effectively advocate for yourself:

1. **Prepare in advance:** Before your appointment, make a list of the questions, concerns, or symptoms you want to discuss with your doctor. Be specific and provide as much detail as possible. Research your symptoms or condition to better understand what you're experiencing.
2. **Be clear and concise:** During your appointment, clearly communicate your concerns and symptoms to your doctor. Describe your symptoms in detail, including their duration, intensity, and any factors that worsen or alleviate them. Avoid using ambiguous terms or medical jargon.
3. **Ask questions:** Don't hesitate to ask your doctor questions about your condition, treatment options, and potential side effects. Seek clarification if something is unclear to you. Asking questions helps you gain a better understanding of your health and enables you to make informed decisions.
4. **Share your medical history:** Provide your doctor with a comprehensive overview of your medical history, including past illnesses, surgeries, medications, allergies, and any chronic conditions. This information can help them make accurate diagnoses and treatment recommendations.
5. **Be assertive but respectful:** Be assertive in expressing your concerns and opinions but remember to maintain a respectful and collaborative tone. Remember, you and your doctor are partners in your healthcare journey, working together to achieve the best outcomes.
6. **Take notes:** Consider bringing a pen and paper or using a note-taking app to jot down important information during your appointment. This can help you remember key details and instructions later.
7. **Seek clarification:** If you don't understand something your doctor says or if their explanation is unclear, don't hesitate to ask for clarification. It's essential to have a clear understanding of your condition and treatment plan.

8. **Request additional tests or referrals:** If you believe further tests, screenings, or referrals to specialists are necessary, discuss your concerns with your doctor and ask if these options can be explored. Trust your instincts and advocate for yourself if you feel it's warranted.
9. **Follow up:** After your appointment, follow up with any additional questions or concerns that may have come to mind. If you're unsure about your treatment plan or medication instructions, contact your doctor's office for clarification.

Remember, effective communication and active participation in your healthcare are key to advocating for your health. By being prepared, asking questions, and staying engaged, you can have a more productive and collaborative relationship with your doctor.

## [Questions to Ask at the Doctor's Office](#)

When it comes to discussing scleroderma with your doctor, it's important to ask questions that address your concerns, treatment options, and overall management of the condition. Here are some key questions you may consider asking your doctor as a scleroderma patient:

1. What type of scleroderma do I have, and what does it mean for my prognosis and treatment options?
2. What are the potential causes or risk factors associated with my specific type of scleroderma?
3. What symptoms should I be aware of and how can I manage them effectively?
4. Are there any specific tests or assessments I should undergo to monitor my condition?
5. What treatments are available for scleroderma and which ones do you recommend for my situation?
6. What are the potential benefits, risks, and side effects of the recommended treatments?
7. Are there any lifestyle modifications or self-care strategies that can help manage my scleroderma symptoms?
8. Are there any support groups or resources available for individuals with scleroderma?
9. How often should I come in for check-ups or follow-up visits?

10. Are there any clinical trials or experimental treatments that I should consider?
11. What are the long-term effects of scleroderma, and what can I do to minimize their impact?
12. Can you provide any recommendations for managing pain, fatigue, or other specific symptoms associated with scleroderma?
13. Should I see any other specialists or healthcare professionals as part of my treatment team?
14. How does scleroderma affect other organs or systems in my body, and how can we monitor their health?
15. Are there any specific precautions or lifestyle changes I should adopt to protect my skin, lungs, or other affected areas?
16. Remember that these questions can serve as a starting point for your discussion with your doctor, and it's important to personalize them based on your unique circumstances and concerns.
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Looking for more resources to help you navigate living with scleroderma and how you can be a part of finding a cure for this disease? Visit us at [srfcure.org](https://www.srfcure.org) to learn more.