

Booth Gardner Parkinson's Care Center

Offering Comprehensive Movement Disorders Care

OPTIMIZE YOUR CARE

Monique Giroux, MD
Sierra Farris, PA-C

This handout includes information about simple ways that **you** can make a big difference in your care. You are your best advocate to get the most from your medical care at the Booth Gardner Parkinson's Care Center. This information will be very helpful before, during and after your doctor visit.

Prior to Your Visit | GOAL: Be Prepared – Keep a Notebook

- A. Write Down Questions** – questions commonly arise between visits. Writing them down in a notebook for your doctor visit helps you to remember to ask them. Allowing space to write answers will enable you to look back at a later time to refresh your memory. **Care partner questions** can also be recorded and addressed during your office visit with your doctor.
- B. Complete the return visit questionnaire ahead of time to avoid rushing through very important information for your doctor.** The answers you provide help guide your doctor to make sure your needs are addressed during your appointment. Your answers also help to greatly reduce medical errors.

Prior to Your Visit | GOAL: Keep Your Medical Information Current

- C. Keep a record of changes that occur between visits.** Examples of things that may change and important to report and keep us up to date:
- Medications - name, strength and timing
 - Keep a running list of all medicines previously tried and the reason for discontinuation.
 - Old or new health problems other than Parkinson's or other movement disorders and any surgeries.
 - Living or care partner arrangements.
 - Falls, when, where and how many.
 - Notify us before you run out of medication or refills.
 - Obtain records and addresses from other doctor visits.
 - Keep a pertinent diary of ongoing and troublesome symptoms, timing and severity.
 - Hallucinations, confusion or memory changes.
 - Note changes that result from calls to your doctor.
 - New doctors and their address, phone and fax numbers.

Prior to Your Visit | GOAL: Make Your Own Health Care Decisions

D. Keep your health care documents up to date and in your notebook.

- Durable Power of Attorney
- Health care directives
- Living Will
- List of people we can talk to about your health or persons we should not talk to about your health.

Prior to Your Visit | GOAL: Prepare Necessary Forms for Accuracy and Timeliness

E. Forms – Make a photocopy of any form that requires completion by your doctor.

Forms may include disability or worker's compensation benefits. Pencil in your response to all questions. Examples include how much you can lift and how many stairs you can climb. This helps your doctor understand your abilities. Keep a copy for your records.

Active Participation 1: Ask your doctor what information is needed to take care of you.

Arrive for your visit at least 15 minutes before your scheduled time, especially if you did not already complete the Return Patient Form. This form is not liked very much by most patients, however:

- It saves time for you and your doctor to spend talking instead of writing.
- It provides an accurate information exchange for both you and your doctor.
- It's another form of communication between you and your doctor.
- The information becomes part of your permanent medical record.
- A Return Patient Form will be sent home with you to fill out prior to your next visit.
- Take notes or come with a care partner or both.
- Care partners can also take notes.
- Ask your questions early during the office visit; don't wait until the end of the visit.

Active Participation 2: Ask your doctor what you can do to optimize your care and quality of life.

- If you don't know why you are taking a medication, ask your doctor; you may no longer need it.
- If you cannot exercise, talk with your doctor, there may be ways you can exercise for overall health.
- Follow-through with general health maintenance appointments.
- Take your medications on time; varying the time you take your medications can make your doctor's job much harder. Dr. Giroux says, "It's like trying to hit a moving target."
- If you find reporting symptoms is difficult or your symptoms are becoming too complex, use a symptom diary.
- If you are participating in physical, occupational, speech or swallowing therapy, inform your doctor of your progress.
- How often do you leave your doctor's office trying to **remember what just happened?** Bringing along a family member or caregiver to keep track of instructions may help so you can focus on discussing concerns with your doctor. The doctor can only help with issues and concerns that you provide. Be an active member of your care.

Active Participation 3: Do you have the information you need to comply with recommendations from your doctor? Can you complete the steps in your care that your doctor has prescribed?

- Your doctor makes recommendations for treatment with the thought that you will be able to do your part. If you feel the dosing regimen is too complicated or you are sure you will not take the prescribed medicine or therapy, it is better to inform your doctor before difficulties arise.
- Our goal to help you feel the best possible relies on your ability and willingness to fulfill your part of the treatment plan. Since every patient is an individual with different lifestyles, treatment plans can be adjusted on a case by case situation to gain the best compliance possible.
- The following questions should always be answered before leaving your office visit:
 1. Do you know what symptoms your medicines are treating?
 2. Do you and your care partner have answers to your prepared list of questions?
 3. Do you understand your part of the treatment plan?
 4. Can you follow your doctor's recommendations?

Active Participation 4: Set your priorities and what is most important to you

You are ultimately in charge. Communication is the foundation for the best possible care from you and your doctor. Each patient has their own set of values, desires and needs. We want to make sure we are moving in the right direction for you when deciding how best to care for you while managing with a chronic disease.

Active Participation 5: Evaluate your coping mechanisms and discuss with the team.

Coping skills can define how well you can live with Parkinson's disease or other movement disorder. You are not a disease but a person living and coping with a disease. Your family also must cope with the daily changes that come with PD. We have resources to help both you and your family when needed.

Active Participation 6: Complete the "Prepare for Your Visit Checklist"

We have included a checklist that follows all the above steps to optimize your healthcare. All the above steps and suggestions will help the team optimize your care at the Booth Gardner Parkinson's Care Center.