

Diagnosis Check List

by Jan Sadler of PainSupport www.painsupport.co.uk



When I first developed serious back pain no-one, including doctors and consultants, seemed able to explain to me exactly what was wrong.

Without a proper diagnosis you can feel isolated and confused. You don't know which way to turn for advice and help. You may not only be uncertain how best to care for your condition on a daily basis but also how to find which treatments or type of specialist you need.

Eventually I realised that I needed to be more pro-active. I needed to learn more about my body and the pain. I also needed to be unafraid to ask questions in a consultation with my doctor, specialist or therapist.

It's not easy when you're feeling ill and in pain, so it's best to create a plan of action well in advance of an appointment so you know exactly what you are going to ask. You are then in a much better position to obtain that elusive diagnosis.

Tips for obtaining a diagnosis



Firstly, take out the fear and mystique from consultations. The medical professionals, and therapists that you see are there for one reason: to help you.

Don't be over-awed by the person you are seeing. It is your right to ask questions to find a diagnosis and to ask what is the best way forward for you.

To get the best co-operation and attention, always be calm and polite – but also quietly and doggedly determined to come away from the appointment with the information and action you need.

Make a Plan of Action

A week or so before your appointment make a plan of action. There is a check list on the last page of this document for you to print out and fill in.

List any tests and results you've had. You are entitled to have these and can get copies from your doctor or hospital department.

Make a note of every symptom you have. Note exactly what sort of pain, sharp, burning, dull, shooting, etc., when it occurs, how long it lasts and how long you've had it. If you have any other symptoms mention them too in case they are related.

Your medications and/or your lifestyle may have some influence. Note if anything either increases or decreases your condition/pain, eg "Walking a half a mile makes the pain worse", or "Taking the tablets twice a day makes me feel nauseous."

Note down any similar family problems, eg "My brother has arthritis."

Make a list of your medications and doses, or take the actual packets/bottles with you.

Write down all the questions you want to ask.

Ask a family member or friend to accompany you for support and also to jog your memory at home when you review what was said.

Keep your notes in a safe place and go through them a few times. Take them with you to the consultation with a pen and paper to jot down anything the doctor says. A final tip is to rehearse beforehand what you are going to do/say.

At the consultation

Stay calm and steady, remember the person is there to help you.

Clearly state the reason for your visit.

Don't suggest a diagnosis, it's best to let the doctor think about all the possibilities rather than close down the investigations.

Ask the doctor questions like, "What information or tests do you need to get to the bottom of this?"

Ask if the doctor can give you a shortlist of what it could be. Ask if there is a specialist you could see. Then ask to see that specialist. You can also do some research beforehand to find a particular specialist and ask if he/she would be appropriate.

Once you do have a diagnosis, if you aren't completely satisfied, you can ask the doctor, "Are you sure I have this?", "Why do you think that?", "Could you arrange for a second opinion from another doctor/consultant?"

To sum up, do your homework before you go to your consultation. Sound confident, stay calm, be polite and most of all be quietly determined to succeed – and you will get that diagnosis which will enable you to make better plans for your health and future.

More useful information:

www.ukfibromyalgia.com

www.painaction.com

www.spine-health.com

More advice on our Medical Consultations page:

<http://painsupport.co.uk/help-advice/medical-consults>

PainSupport: www.painsupport.co.uk

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Record of medical tests, treatments, symptoms, etc.

Medications used	Comments about effects of medications
Tests	Results of Tests
Symptoms and type of pain, eg burning, dull, sharp, etc.	
What decreases or increases the symptoms	
Any similar family problems	
Questions	