



Preparing for PH Clinic Appointments

Preparing for your medical appointments is an important step in taking charge of your treatment plan. Being prepared for clinic visits can help you get the most out of them, reduce stress, and establish effective communication with your medical team. Here are some tips and ideas for preparing for appointments.

Learn about pulmonary hypertension

At any stage of your journey, it can be empowering to understand what's happening to your body and learn about your treatment plan so you can take an active role in managing your disease. Ask your medical team about which information is relevant to you and if they can provide resources.

PHA Canada has a number of educational print and electronic resources available for patients and caregivers:

www.phacanada.ca

Web portal for the PH community providing resources for patients and caregivers, research news, and information on community events.

- Information and resources for CTEPH patients: www.phacanada.ca/cteph
- Information and resources for families of children with PH: www.phacanada.ca/pediatrics

www.livingwithph.ca

Educational website providing comprehensive information to help patients and caregivers better understand PH, including its causes, diagnosis, and treatment.

Fill out paperwork ahead of time

Call the clinic and ask them to email, mail, or fax you any paperwork you will be asked to fill out. This way you will have time to fill out forms at home and provide all necessary details. Make two copies; keep one for your own records and bring the other to your appointment.

If you cannot get the paperwork in advance, write down your medical history and relevant information (such as a list of medications) before your appointment. Preparing this information ahead of time will make it easier to fill out forms at the clinic and will help you remember key facts.

Have someone accompany you to your appointment

It is a good idea for your primary caregiver to accompany you to all of your clinic appointments. They can provide you with moral support during the visit and be there to ask questions. After your appointment, they can help you remember information provided by the doctor or nurse. Being present at appointments will also help your caregiver understand your disease better and empower them to advocate for you in emergency situations.

Create a file for all your medical information

Organizing your medical information in a file (or binder) can help you keep track of your treatment plan and the evolution of your symptoms. You can take this file to all of your appointments and ask doctors for copies of your medical records.

Your medical information file should include:

- A list of all your doctors and their contact information;
- A list of your medications (including information such as: name of medication, dose and frequency, why you take the medication, when you began taking it, and which physician prescribed the medication). If possible, bring medications in their original containers to your appointments;
- A copy of all your medical records;
- Copies of test and lab results;
- A pad of paper to write down questions and take notes.

Make a list of questions

Doctor's appointments can be overwhelming and it's easy to forget to ask an important question. Writing down questions for your medical team can help ensure you remember them for your next appointment. As questions come up in your day-to-day life, jot them down in your medical file, that way you will be sure to ask them at your next appointment.

Questions you may want to ask:

At an appointment:

- How often should I come to see you?
- What changes you should I make to my diet, exercise routine, or lifestyle?

If a test or procedure is ordered:

- What does the test/procedure involve?
- What will the results of this test/procedure tell you?
- What are the potential complications?
- What changes can I expect to my course of treatment?

If a medication is prescribed:

- How will this medication improve my health?
- What are the potential side effects of the medication?

Do not be afraid to ask your medical team for further explanation if you don't understand the information they provide. Remember that communicating effectively with your medical team helps ensure that you are receiving the best possible care.

Remember: you are your own best advocate

Although members of your medical team are experts in PH, you know your body best. Don't be afraid to ask for explanations and to tell your doctor or nurse about your unique condition. The more you are able to take charge of your treatment plan, by understanding your condition and communicating effectively with your medical team, the better your particular needs will be met.