

Preparing Your Thoughts Before Your Appointment

An interactive guide to help you reflect and prioritize.

When you’re living with cancer, preparing for a medical appointment may feel stressful or overwhelming. There can be a lot of information to take in, and it’s easy to leave feeling like you forgot to ask something.

A little preparation can go a long way. And before you prepare your questions, it can help to prepare your thoughts. This worksheet can help you reflect, set priorities, and approach your appointment with a clearer idea of what you want to get out of it. There are no right answers — just what’s true for you right now.

Getting clear on what matters most to you

What's worrying you most right now?

If time runs short, what's the one thing you want to come away with?

What's one question you've been putting off asking?

Noticing what has changed since your last appointment

Are you experiencing any new symptoms, changes, or side effects?

What has changed since your last appointment? For example, your sleep, energy, appetite, mood, or pain levels.

Have you started, stopped, or changed any medications?

Thinking about what would make this appointment a success

What do you hope to better understand after this appointment?

What do you wish your care team knew about your life right now?

Would you feel better having someone with you, in person or by phone?

Microsteps to support you in preparing your thoughts before your appointment

Microsteps are small, science-backed actions that help build sustainable habits over time. Here are a few that may help you feel more prepared. As always, talk to your care team about personal health advice that's right for you.

Choosing one goal for your appointment before you arrive.

Appointments can move quickly, and it's easy to leave feeling like you didn't get to what mattered most. Knowing what matters most to you may help you stay focused and make the most of your time with your care team. Having multiple goals is fine, but one is enough to start.

Asking a trusted friend or loved one to come with you to your appointment.

Sitting through an appointment on your own can be overwhelming, especially when there's a lot of information coming at you. Having someone by your side may help you feel more comfortable, remember important information, and ask questions you might otherwise forget.

Arriving a few minutes early to your appointment.

It sounds simple, but giving yourself extra time may help reduce stress and allow you to settle in before the conversation begins. You can also use the time to prepare questions and reflect on what you hope to learn.

Whatever you bring to this appointment, your questions, your worries, or just yourself, showing up is enough.