

Talking to Your Doctor About Your Pain

Any consultation with a doctor is a two-way process. The doctor brings his/her clinical expertise to the meeting and the patient his/her personal experience of the problem and how it is affecting his/her life

The experience of pain is a very personal issue and it is important that you consider and make note of the following:

1. What is your main reason for consulting the doctor?
2. If your pain is unchanged, do you have other symptoms and if so are these making you more anxious? If so, list them in order of concern, i.e. stops me sleeping, stops me working, prevents me taking part in social activities, etc.
3. If the pain is unchanged despite any self-help activity or treatment prescribed by your doctor, keep a diary to show when your pain is better or worse, what activities you have undertaken and what you have done to try to relieve your pain. This may help your doctor to suggest other treatments which may be helpful to you.
4. If the pain is different or more intense, try to think of the following:
 - (a) When did the change occur, can you pinpoint what may have caused the change?
 - (b) Is the pain actually worse, if so by how much and when, i.e. all the time, at night, after exertion or change in position?
5. If the pain is different, try to find words to describe the change, i.e. it was an aching pain which is now stabbing, throbbing, burning, etc.
6. If this is your first visit to the doctor to discuss the pain think about the questions contained in questions one and three as well as the following:
 - (a) Is there anything in your medical history that could explain your pain, i.e. have you recently suffered from an infection?
 - (b) What worries you most about the pain?
 - (c) What do you hope to get from your doctor, e.g. relief of anxiety, acceptance that the pain exists, relief of pain, investigation of the cause of the pain, other help?

