Talking with Your Doctor

Below are lists of questions adopted from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) that you could print out. Take these questions with you every time you visit your doctor. Ask them so you know what is being communicated.

Did your doctor give you a prescription?
- What is the name of the medicine?
- Can I take a generic version of this medicine?
- What is the medicine for?
- How am I supposed to take it?
- When should I take my medicine?
- How much medicine should I take?
- How long do I need to take the medicine?
- When will the medicine start working?
- Can I stop taking my medicine if I feel better?
- Can I get a refill?
- Are there any side effects?
- When should I tell someone about a side effect?
- Do I need to avoid any food, drinks, or activities?
- Does this new prescription mean I should stop taking any other medicines I’m taking now?
- Can I take vitamins with my prescription?
- What should I do if I forget to take my medicine?
- What should I do if I accidentally take more than the recommended dose?
- Is there any written information I can take home with me?

Did you recently receive a medical diagnosis?
- What is my diagnosis?
- What is the technical name of my disease or condition, and what does it mean in plain English?
- What is my prognosis (outlook for the future)?
- What changes will I need to make?
- Is there a chance that someone else in my family might get the same condition?
- Will I need special help at home for my condition?
- Is there any treatment?
- What are my treatment options?
- How soon do I need to make a decision about treatment?
- What are the benefits and risks associated with my treatment options?
- Is there a clinical trial (research study) that is right for me?
- Will I need any additional tests?
- What organizations and resources do you recommend for support and information?

Are you scheduled to have a medical test?
- What is the test for?
- How is the test done?
- Will the test hurt?
- How accurate is the test?
- Is this test the only way to find out that information?
- What are the benefits and risks of having this test?
- What do I need to do to prepare for the test?
- How many times have you performed the test?
- When will I get the results?
- What will the results tell me?
Are you considering treatment for an illness or condition?

- What are my treatment options?
- What do you recommend?
- Is the treatment painful?
- How can the pain be controlled?
- What are the benefits and risks of this treatment?
- How much does this treatment cost?
- Will my health insurance cover the treatment?
- What are the expected results?
- When will I see results from the treatment?
- What are the chances the treatment will work?
- Are there any side effects?
- What can be done about them?
- How soon do I need to make a decision about treatment?
- What happens if I choose to have no treatment at all?

Are you choosing a clinician?

- Is this clinician part of my health plan?
- Does this clinician have the background and training I need?
- Is this clinician able to work at the hospital I like?
- Can I talk to this clinician and ask questions easily?
- Does this clinician listen to me?
- Does this clinician wash his or her hands between examining each patient?

Are you choosing a hospital?

- Which hospital has the best care for my condition?
- Is this hospital covered by my health insurance?
- Does the hospital meet national quality standards?
- How does the hospital compare with others in my area?
- Has the hospital had success with my condition?
- Does my clinician have privileges (is allowed to work) at this hospital?
- How well does the hospital check and improve on its own quality of care?