

IMPROVING COMMUNICATION BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR DOCTOR

The following document was prepared by the Myasthenia Gravis Association.

There is nothing more important than your health!

BEFORE CALLING THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE

- Call early in the day
- Have pen & paper at hand & calendar if necessary for appointment info
- Be clear about why you're calling
- Recognize that you are not going to speak with the doctor
- Write down or practice what you are going to say with the least amount of words
- Be prepared to speak up and speak clearly. Clear your throat, blow nose, (if necessary)
- If office voice mail is on, be prepared to leave a message and call back number
- Learn the routine at your doctor's office so you can make the system work for you

IF CALLING BECAUSE OF A MEDICAL PROBLEM

- Write down symptoms/changes/pain estimated from 1-10/infection/ temperature
- When did symptoms begin/how long?
- How are symptoms effecting you: eating/sleeping/breathing/walking?
- Educate yourself about your condition so you can be understood & understand

IF CALLING FOR A MEDICATION REFILL

- Do not wait until you only have one or two doses left (especially before a weekend or holiday)
- Have available: medication name, mg, dosage, how taken, how often taken
- Have available: pharmacy name & phone number & FAX number

INFORMATION FOR THE PHARMACY

- Tell the pharmacy if you have prescriptions at another pharmacy, the medication name, dose, how taken, so they can look out for medication interactions
- Tell the pharmacist about allergies, particularly medication allergies

AT THE OFFICE & COMMUNICATING WITH THE NURSE OR DOCTOR

- This is not a social call. Your time is limited. Before you go to appointment, write down concerns, questions, issues. Be prepared.
- Prepare for a cold environment. Doctor's offices must be 72 degrees to reduce the spread of germs. Bring a sweater in case of a long wait in an exam room.
- Bring a pen and paper or family member/friend to take notes
- If you bring a family member/friend, introduce them with relationship, to doctor
- Be clear about what you want to say & practice. There's no time to ramble.
- Separate your feelings of anger/fear/disappointment/grief with being "present" and open to receive information. LISTEN. Don't waste this opportunity!
- If you have lots of things to talk about, make a consultation appointment, so the office manager can schedule enough time for you to meet with the doctor in an unhurried way.
- Don't assume anything! Don't assume the doctor's read your chart, is knowledgeable about your entire medical history or knows that you see other doctors & are taking other medications or supplements.
- The doctor may assume that: you understand medical terminology, severity of your condition, that you have a living will, that you have someone who can help you if you have limitations, that you have enough money to purchase medications or medical equipment, that you have transportation. IT'S OK TO ASK. SPEAK UP!
- Doctors need basic information in order to diagnose & prescribe, determine tests, so: be prepared to relate how you feel, medication results, pain, symptoms allergies, (particularly to medications) etc.
- It's okay to ask if the nurse or doctor to repeat, restate, explain, slow down or speak up!
- It is okay to be concerned about medications that are being prescribed and to ask questions about possible side-effects.
- It's okay to get another opinion. Don't worry about hurting your doctor's feelings.
- Appreciate what the doctor is doing to help & say thank you from time to time.

BE YOUR OWN HEALTH CARE ADVOCATE!

- Stay involved & informed regarding your health.
- Take medications as directed.
- Tell the doctor if you believe you are having a reaction to your medication.
- Keep your doctor appointments & follow-up with referrals for tests.
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle: sleep, exercise, water, nutritious foods, etc.
- Remember, YOU are ultimately responsible for your health!