



HOW TO PREPARE FOR AN APPOINTMENT WITH YOUR HEALTH CARE TEAM

Dr. Sabrina Hoa, MD MSC,
Rheumatologist, clinical researcher at the CHUM
Research Centre



Here are a few tips to prepare for your appointment with your medical team.



MEDICATIONS

Have your medication list up to date and note if there are any side effects to the medications. If you are not taking some of the medications as prescribed, it is important to report this to your doctor so that a fair assessment can be made of the effectiveness of the treatments. Also, tell your doctor if you take over-the-counter medications or natural products.

BLOOD PRESSURE

Blood pressure should ideally be taken at home twice a week, or daily in patients at higher risk of developing scleroderma renal crisis. Bring your blood pressure log to help your doctor determine if further investigation is needed to detect a kidney complication.

BLOOD TESTS

If blood tests were prescribed at the last appointment, do them early enough (1 to 2 weeks) before the appointment so that the results can be available at the time of the appointment.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR AN APPOINTMENT WITH YOUR HEALTH CARE TEAM

SYMPTOMS OF SCLERODERMA

Take note of any change in symptoms associated with the disease. For example, have there been any new symptoms? Have the symptoms worsened, or have they improved following a change in treatment? More specifically for each symptom, the following details are particularly relevant:

- ▶ **Raynaud's phenomenon:** frequency and duration of attacks;
- ▶ **digital ulcers:** pain, discharge, redness, fever;
- ▶ **skin:** progression of thickening, itchy skin;
- ▶ **cardiopulmonary:** chest pain, palpitations, shortness of breath (after what level of effort), cough, loss of consciousness, leg swelling;
- ▶ **digestive:** reflux, heartburn, early satiety, nausea and vomiting, abdominal pain, bloating, diarrhea, constipation, fecal incontinence, weight loss;
- ▶ **renal:** high blood pressure at home, decreased urine output, headaches, blurred vision, confusion;
- ▶ **arthritis:** joint pain (where and when), morning stiffness (duration);
- ▶ **myositis:** difficulty climbing stairs or getting up from a chair without using your arms due to muscular fatigue.



VACCINES

Vaccination against certain infections, such as influenza and pneumococcus, is recommended to prevent serious infection-related complications in the context of a chronic disease such as systemic sclerosis, particularly in patients with pulmonary involvement and in patients taking immunosuppressive medications. Make sure to bring your immunization record to your appointment so your doctor can determine if you need an update.

INVESTIGATIONS

Consultations and hospitalizations: if you have undergone additional examinations or consulted other doctors, or if you have been hospitalized since your last appointment, make a note of the details: dates, clinic or hospital center, reason for consultation, change in medication, etc. It is important that your doctor taking care of your systemic sclerosis is familiar with the general state of your health. If necessary, the doctor may ask for a copy of the investigation or hospitalization reports.

