

Preparing for your doctor's visit

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As a Client Support Coordinator, I am often contacted by individuals who are experiencing possible symptoms of dementia or are concerned about the symptoms they are witnessing in a family member or friend. Having decided that it is time to see a doctor, they often ask about how to best prepare for the appointment. The Alzheimer Society **Preparing for your doctor's visit** (http://www.alzheimer.ca/~media/Files/national/Tip-sheets/tipsheet_Preparingforyourdoctor_e.pdf) is a resource I share quite often. This resource provides a checklist for self-reporting symptoms which reflect the common warning signs of dementia. The second page of the resource also outlines additional questions to ask your doctor regarding next steps and getting a diagnosis.

Having shared this resource in caregiver support groups recently, participants have mentioned that they wish they had access to this resource when their family member was first displaying the warning signs of dementia. Some caregivers mentioned that, at the time, they were not sure if the doctor was receiving accurate information from the person with dementia due to a lack of insight of symptoms or short term memory loss that limited self-reporting. Caregivers reported that often times the person with dementia would say that



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everything was “fine” when visiting the doctor. It is important to note that a symptom of dementia itself can be lack of insight into one’s symptoms. If this is the case, the person with dementia may be limited in their ability to self-report symptoms, even with this supportive resource. Caregivers can then use this resource to convey what they are noticing from day to day.

Participants in our support group for those with early stage dementia also discussed the benefits of this resource. They stated that time with their doctor can be limited and they may leave the appointment feeling that they did not share all of the information they wanted to. They also mentioned that during their time with the doctor, it can be difficult to recall and report the changes they are experiencing, especially in great detail. This resource allows those exhibiting possible symptoms of dementia (who have insight into these symptoms) to reflect *beforehand* on what they are experiencing. Family members can also be included in this discussion incase they are noticing different symptoms. The resource then acts as a memory aid during the appointment to help facilitate the discussion with the doctor.

Deciding to see a doctor about possible symptoms of dementia is difficult and it is best to be as prepared as possible. For additional recommendations about things you can be doing before, during, or after a doctor’s visit, please click on the following link:

<http://www.alzheimer.ca/en/About-dementia/Diagnosis/Preparing-for-your-doctor-s-visit>

Not sure if it is time to see the doctor? Watch the video ***When should I be concerned about my memory?*** on the Alzheimer Society of Canada website for more information:

<http://www.alzheimer.ca/en/About-dementia/Diagnosis>

