



QUESTIONS TO ASK A SLEEP HEALTHCARE PROVIDER

Meeting with a sleep healthcare provider can be overwhelming, with a lot of information discussed in a short time. The goal of this guide is to help you get the most out of your appointments while also helping you consider whether a healthcare provider is a good fit for you – with an appreciation for your circumstances and relevant knowledge and experience about your condition.

Your appointment should always be a two-way conversation with you and your provider working together to make decisions that are best for you. Your sleep specialist will share evidence-based information about available options, but always remember: you are the expert on your body, your experience, your goals, and your preferences.

Not all questions will be relevant to you right now. We suggest highlighting a few relevant questions and bringing this PDF with you to your appointment.

PREPARING FOR YOUR APPOINTMENT

- Sleep disorders are often invisible and hard to detect, yet sneak into our lives in big and small ways we may not notice. Reflect on recent examples of how your symptoms affect your functioning, mood, cognition, responsibilities, or social life. Consider asking loved ones for their perspectives as well, as they may see, hear, or notice things you might not have noticed or have forgotten.
- Reflect on what goals you have for your healthcare journey at this point. Are there specific priorities, events, or activities that are especially important to you?
- Bring a list of all the medications and supplements you currently take.
- If possible, bring a supportive loved one along to medical appointments. They can help make sure all your questions are answered, take notes, and serve as a second set of ears, especially if you experience any brain fog or memory issues. Having a loved one meet your doctor can also help your loved one better understand your diagnosis and treatment plan.
- Take notes and ask the provider for a summary of the visit.
- If requested, keep a diary of your sleep and your daytime and nighttime symptoms for a couple of weeks before your appointment, using an app or paper (e.g. from [AASM](#)).

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE SLEEP HEALTHCARE PROVIDER

Questions About the Sleep Healthcare Provider

- What is your medical specialty? Do you have special training in sleep medicine?
- Have you cared for people with my same diagnosis?
- About how many people with my same diagnosis do you care for?
- Do you work with a multidisciplinary team? If so, how might they be involved in my care?
- How frequently do you recommend we have appointments at this point in my journey, given that I was diagnosed X months/years ago?
- How should I best contact you or your team if I have major new concerns between appointments?
- Do you have experience caring for people with my condition going through pregnancy? (See Project Sleep's [Narcolepsy & Pregnancy Toolkit](#) for more tips and considerations when planning for parenthood.)

Questions about diagnostic procedures

- What tests would I need to diagnose a sleep disorder? What is the goal of each test?
- Where would they take place, and what follow-up appointments are needed?
- How should I prepare for each test?
- Would I need an overnight sleep study? What should I consider if I have the choice between completing a sleep study at home or in the laboratory?
- Are there any other possible explanations or conditions to be ruled out or considered at this point? If so, what specialties should I consider?

Questions about diagnosis

- What is my diagnosis? Are there subtypes? If yes, what subtype do I have?
- What symptoms might I experience with this condition?
- Is it possible for my symptoms or diagnosis to change over time?
- Do you recommend any other testing or lab work at this point?

- Do you have suggestions for additional resources to learn more about my condition?
- If testing did NOT confirm a sleep disorder: what next steps should I take to resolve my concerns? Is there different testing for other sleep disorders or different specialists I should consider?

Questions about treatment

- What are the available treatment options for this condition?
- Given my current circumstances and preferences, what treatment options might you recommend I consider at this point?
- What are the potential benefits and risks of each treatment option? Which symptoms may be improved?
- Please explain the medications, devices, or therapies being prescribed to me. What does each one do?
- How might I feel while taking or using the prescribed treatments?
- What are the potential side effects of these treatment options? Are their potential side effects that, if I experience them, I should reach out immediately or discontinue treatment? Is it okay to discontinue immediately or do I need to taper down?
- If I stop treatment, are there any rebound impacts?
- When will we follow up? Would I follow up with you or another team member? Is an in-office visit required to make changes to treatments?
- How could treatments affect medications I'm taking for other health issues?
- Do treatment options impact birth control, hormone therapy, or menstrual cycle?
- Are there clinical trial opportunities for people with my condition? How can I learn more about clinical trial opportunities?

Questions about other health issues

- Could my sleep disorder, treatment, and my other health issues affect each other?
- Could any medications I'm taking disturb sleep?

Questions about lifestyle and social concerns

- How do other people with my condition navigate work, school, travel, and driving?
- Who can I speak with about my financial and/or insurance concerns? Are there support programs available?
- Are there any lifestyle changes I should consider? How can I best optimize my energy?
- Would naps help me manage my symptoms or make them worse?
- Do you know of any patient support groups, local meetups, or other resources I might benefit from?

QUESTIONS THE SLEEP HEALTHCARE PROVIDER MAY ASK YOU

- What issues with sleep or tiredness have you been experiencing, and for how long?
- When did you first notice symptoms? Did anything else in your life change then?
- What time do you usually go to bed and get up each day?
- How long does it take you to fall asleep after you go to bed?
- Do you ever wake up during the night? How long does it take you to go back to sleep?
- Do you ever wake up early and are unable to go back to sleep?
- Do you take naps? How often, and how long for?
- Do you ever fall asleep when you do not mean to?
- How often do you travel across time zones?
- Do you ever work night, late, or early shifts? Does your schedule change?
- How do your symptoms affect your ability to work, keep up with school, and be involved in your family life or social life?
- Has anyone told you that you snore, kick your legs, act out your dreams, or do other behaviors in your sleep?
- What are your goals for treatment? Are there any specific activities or areas of daily functioning where you'd especially like to see improvements? What are your fears or concerns?

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF AFTERWARD

- Does the provider encourage me to ask questions?
- Does the provider ask me about my preferences and goals?
- Do they explain things in a way I understand?
- Did the provider listen and address my biggest concerns?
- Does the provider have relevant experience to my sleep disorder diagnosis?
- Do they seem up-to-date on evidence-based treatment options and willing to work together to find a treatment plan for me? Are they familiar with clinical trials?
- Do I feel comfortable asking the provider questions?
- When major concerns come up between appointments, am I able to get in touch with my provider or their team members in a timely manner?
- Did anything during the appointment not “sit right” with me? Should I consider seeking a second opinion? Most doctors understand that patients have the right to a second opinion. You are under no obligation to be treated by the first provider you see and a second opinion could lead you to a more advanced treatment plan or to one more tailored to your individual needs.