

## **How to make the most out of your doctor's appointment :**

Dear patient: During your first doctor's appointment you and your doctor will be getting to know each other; that is why this first doctor's appointment is so important. You can make the most of it if you carefully prepare beforehand and follow these basic recommendations:

### **Before you go to the doctor:**

- Find out the exact address of your doctor's office, points of reference and directions to get there easily. If necessary use a map. Ask which facilities are available such as X-rays, parking, elevator, wheel chairs, handicapped facilities etc.
- Make an appointment, ask the doctor's assistant for the available free spaces in the doctor's schedule, and choose the one that best suits you, ask about the doctor's fees and the possible methods of payment.
- Don't forget to bring with you **all** medical information that you have in your possession such as X-rays, lab tests, special studies, prescriptions, etc.
- Make a list of all the medications you are currently taking and a list of medications you are allergic to.
- In written form, bring your medical history including all previous medical problems and surgeries.
- Make a list of all your complaints and preoccupations associated with your current medical condition such as pain, loss of mobility, loss of function, etc.
- If you're planning to ask someone to accompany you, ask an adult, do not take children if possible. If you think you'll need an interpreter, then arrange for one beforehand.
- Dress properly. For all hip and knee problems, your doctor will most likely ask you to undress. Use comfortable clothes that are easy to put on and take off.

### **During the doctor's appointment:**

- Try to get there 20 minutes before the appointment, you will probably be asked to fill in some forms.
- It is normal to feel some kind of anxiety during the first visit; little by little you will gain confidence in your doctor and will eventually relax. He/she will help you feel more comfortable.
- Be honest and share all information required by your doctor. Do not hide information about important subjects such as incontinence, memory loss, sex, drugs or other medical problems.
- Try not to digress from the subject. It may be fun to share news about your children but do not prolong the appointment. Try to focus on the problem at hand.
- If necessary take notes. Don't hesitate to ask if you have questions or if you don't understand a medical expression or if the use of certain medications or a medical test is unclear. Ask your doctor until everything is clear.
- Ask your doctor what you can expect from the treatment proposed, how will it affect your daily life, what are the potential complications of the procedure, and what can you do to prevent future damage to your joints.
- You can ask your doctor for written information about your problem so you can go over it at home alone or with your family. He/she will probably give you an Internet site where you can look up more information.
- If you still have questions or worries let your doctor or doctor's assistant know.

## **When you arrive home after the doctor's appointment:**

Check all the material that your doctor gave you; if there is something that you don't remember or something that is not clear and you didn't take notes, then don't hesitate to call your doctor and ask to speak to him or his assistant.

Follow all recommendations and treatment indicated by your doctor; that includes medications, diet and exercise. Remember that you are also part of the medical team in charge of your own health.

Inform your doctor of any change in your medical condition.

## **Questions to ask your doctor if he recommends surgery:**

- Are there other alternatives?
- Why do you recommend this procedure if there are other alternatives?
- What are the benefits of this surgical procedure with respect to pain, function and mobility?
- How long will surgical benefits last?
- What are the potential risks?
- What's the name of the procedure and how is it done?
- What percentage of patients feel improvement?
- Will I be needing any more surgeries after the first one?
- How many surgeries of this kind do you perform year?
- What will happen if I decide not to have the surgery performed?
- In case I desire a second opinion, who can I consult?
- Will I need further tests before surgery?
- What kind of anaesthesia will I receive? What are the risks involved?
- What kind of implant will I receive? How long will it last?
- Will I feel pain after surgery?
- How long will my recovery take? Will I need help at home and for how long?
- Will I have any physical impairments after surgery?
- Will I need physiotherapy?
- When will I be able to get back to work ?
- When will I be able to drive?
- When will I be able to have sex?
- When will I be able to walk?

If you are planning to have surgery and you have insurance that covers your medical expenses, please confirm with your agent if this kind of surgery is covered by your insurance plan. If not, ask your doctor about all the costs involved with this procedure, ask about the different forms of payment and if there are discounts.

Finally, we would like to express our desire to help. Have no doubt about getting in touch with us and surely, hand in hand with our surgical team, you will find that having a hip or knee replacement will be a gratifying experience. Remember we are here to help you.

Dr. Stefan Martínez van Gils & Dr. Isaac Cervantes.

**The main reason for the above information is to inform patients. We are not responsible for the decisions made by patients without previously consulting their attending physician.**