

# Questions To Ask Your Doctor

Many people may have questions for their doctors about tests, surgery and other procedures, therapy and recovery, drug treatment, risk factors and lifestyle changes. Here are examples of common questions; the topics are in alphabetical order.

## About blood cholesterol

- \_\_\_ What do my cholesterol numbers mean?
- \_\_\_ What is my goal cholesterol level?
- \_\_\_ How often should I have my levels checked?
- \_\_\_ How does exercise affect my cholesterol levels?
- \_\_\_ What type of foods should I eat?
- \_\_\_ Will I need cholesterol-lowering medicine?
- \_\_\_ How long will it take to reach my cholesterol goals?

## About diet after heart attack, stroke or surgery

- \_\_\_ What foods should I eat?
- \_\_\_ What foods should I limit?
- \_\_\_ How do I read food labels?
- \_\_\_ What are some cooking tips for me?
- \_\_\_ What about eating out?
- \_\_\_ What can I eat at fast-food restaurants?
- \_\_\_ How can I control the portions?
- \_\_\_ How much salt may I eat?

## About drug treatment

- \_\_\_ Will I need to take medicine?
- \_\_\_ What kind of medicine should I take?
- \_\_\_ Will my insurance cover this medication?
- \_\_\_ Can I take the generic form of the medicine?
- \_\_\_ What should I know about the medicine?
- \_\_\_ What are the side effects?
- \_\_\_ How do I know if it's working?
- \_\_\_ How can I remember when to take medicine?
- \_\_\_ What if I forget to take a medicine?
- \_\_\_ Should I avoid any foods or other medicines?
- \_\_\_ Can I drink alcohol?
- \_\_\_ How long will I need to take my medicine?
- \_\_\_ Will I have to keep taking medicine?

## **About high blood pressure**

- \_\_\_ What should my blood pressure be?
- \_\_\_ What are my options in controlling high blood pressure?
- \_\_\_ How often should my blood pressure be checked?
- \_\_\_ What about home blood pressure monitors?
- \_\_\_ Should I use blood pressure machines at stores?
- \_\_\_ How does exercise affect my blood pressure?
- \_\_\_ What's my daily sodium (or salt) limit?
- \_\_\_ Is there sodium in the medicine I take?
- \_\_\_ Will I need to take blood pressure medicine?
- \_\_\_ Will I always have to take medicine?
- \_\_\_ Why do I need to lose weight?

## **About the hospital (before surgery or procedure)**

- \_\_\_ When do I check in?
- \_\_\_ What will happen before the (surgery, procedure)?
- \_\_\_ How long will it take?
- \_\_\_ Where can my family wait for me?
- \_\_\_ What effects (temporary or permanent) will the surgery have on me?
- \_\_\_ What is the doctor's experience in performing this procedure?
- \_\_\_ What medicines will be prescribed (short term/long term)?
- \_\_\_ For how long will I have to rest at home after surgery?

## **About a pacemaker or implanted defibrillator**

- \_\_\_ Does the shock hurt?
- \_\_\_ How long will my batteries last?
- \_\_\_ How do I know if it's working?
- \_\_\_ When can I take showers and baths?
- \_\_\_ Can I swim?
- \_\_\_ What equipment or devices should I avoid?
- \_\_\_ Can my arrhythmia be cured?

## **About physical activity after stroke, heart attack or surgery**

- \_\_\_ Why is physical activity important?
- \_\_\_ Can I exercise? When?
- \_\_\_ Can I play sports?
- \_\_\_ What are the best types of activities for me?

\_\_\_ How much activity do I need?

\_\_\_ Can I have sex?

### **About physical therapy and rehabilitation**

\_\_\_ When do I start rehabilitation?

\_\_\_ How often should I go to rehab?

\_\_\_ Is it covered by my health insurance?

\_\_\_ How long will I need therapy?

\_\_\_ What happens when my rehab program stops?

### **About quitting cigarettes and tobacco**

\_\_\_ What can I do to stop the cravings?

\_\_\_ How many minutes do cravings last?

\_\_\_ What about a nicotine patch or gum?

\_\_\_ After I quit, when will the urges stop?

\_\_\_ What if I start gaining weight?

\_\_\_ How can I keep from gaining weight?

\_\_\_ How can family and friends help?

\_\_\_ What if I slip and go back to tobacco?

\_\_\_ How long will it take to reduce my risk?

\_\_\_ What do I do if a nicotine patch or gum doesn't work?

### **About recovery at home (after heart attack, stroke or surgery)**

\_\_\_ Can leaving the hospital cause mixed feelings?

\_\_\_ Will I need special transportation or equipment?

\_\_\_ Should I stay in bed?

\_\_\_ How much activity can I do?

\_\_\_ How can my family help me?

\_\_\_ Can I get financial assistance?

\_\_\_ Can I get emotional assistance?

\_\_\_ Can I get in-home assistance for daily tasks?

\_\_\_ What type of diet should I eat?

\_\_\_ What about medicine?

\_\_\_ Will my (aphasia, chest pains, weakness, etc.) go away?

\_\_\_ When should I call my doctor?

\_\_\_ Are my feelings normal?

\_\_\_ What if I stay depressed?

\_\_\_ Can I have sex?

- \_\_\_ How soon can I drive?
- \_\_\_ When can I go back to work?
- \_\_\_ When should I schedule a visit to the doctor?
- \_\_\_ How can I prevent another attack?
- \_\_\_ What changes should I make in my lifestyle?

### **About recovery in the hospital (after stroke, heart attack or surgery)**

- \_\_\_ What happens after surgery?
- \_\_\_ How soon can my family visit?
- \_\_\_ Will there be pain or fever?
- \_\_\_ What are the ICU and CCU?
- \_\_\_ What happens in the ICU and CCU?
- \_\_\_ What are the tubes and wires for?
- \_\_\_ Can I see the monitors?
- \_\_\_ What does it mean if an alarm goes off?
- \_\_\_ What feelings can arise in the ICU?
- \_\_\_ When will I leave the ICU?
- \_\_\_ How long will the breathing tube stay in?
- \_\_\_ What happens when I leave the ICU?
- \_\_\_ What can be done to help in recovery?
- \_\_\_ How soon can I get out of bed?
- \_\_\_ What is a good sleeping position?
- \_\_\_ When can I eat and drink?
- \_\_\_ What about bathing?
- \_\_\_ When will my (chest, head, neck, leg, etc.) heal?
- \_\_\_ What about medicine?
- \_\_\_ How long will the pain last?
- \_\_\_ When do I start rehabilitation?
- \_\_\_ How long do I stay in the hospital?
- \_\_\_ What should my family know?

### **About surgery or procedures**

- \_\_\_ Will I need surgery?
- \_\_\_ Why do I need it?
- \_\_\_ What is the surgery or procedure like?
- \_\_\_ How is it done?
- \_\_\_ What are the risks?
- \_\_\_ Could I have a stroke or heart attack during surgery?

- \_\_\_ What are the alternatives?
- \_\_\_ Will I need this procedure or surgery again?
- \_\_\_ What should my family know?

### **About symptoms and warning signs**

- \_\_\_ How can I tell a heart attack from angina?
- \_\_\_ How is a heart attack different from a stroke?
- \_\_\_ How is a TIA different from a stroke?
- \_\_\_ What should I do if I have any of the symptoms of a stroke or heart attack?
- \_\_\_ Where can I or someone in my family take a CPR class?

### **About tests for heart or brain function**

- \_\_\_ Why do I need it?
- \_\_\_ How is it done?
- \_\_\_ Will it hurt?
- \_\_\_ What will the test show?
- \_\_\_ How soon will I get the results?
- \_\_\_ What is monitored during the test?
- \_\_\_ What equipment is used?
- \_\_\_ Is there a risk?
- \_\_\_ Could it give me a heart attack or stroke?
- \_\_\_ What are the alternatives?
- \_\_\_ Will my artificial heart valve cause problems?
- \_\_\_ Could my implanted pacemaker cause problems?
- \_\_\_ Will I need more tests?

### **About weight control**

- \_\_\_ Why are weight control and physical activity important?
- \_\_\_ How often should I check my weight?
- \_\_\_ How much weight should I lose?
- \_\_\_ How fast should I lose weight?
- \_\_\_ What diet guidelines should I follow?
- \_\_\_ What are the best types of physical activities for me?
- \_\_\_ How much physical activity do I need to do?
- \_\_\_ How much weight gain is too much?
- \_\_\_ How can family and friends help?
- \_\_\_ How do I find a dietitian to help me develop a good, long-term weight-loss plan?