

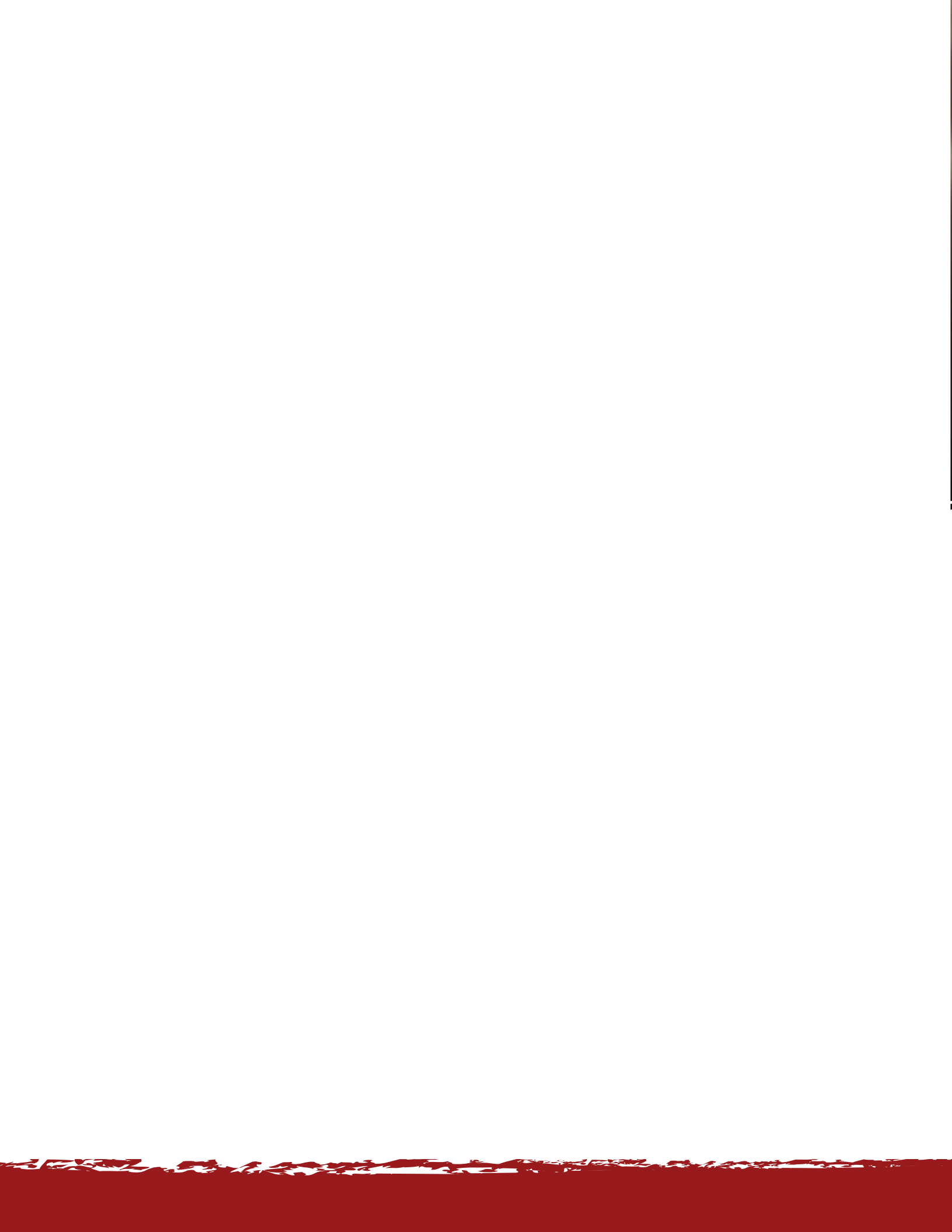


4G: Give, Get, Grasp, Gauge

Guide to Talking with Your Doctor about Relationships and Intimacy Concerns



NAVY AND MARINE CORPS PUBLIC HEALTH CENTER
PREVENTION AND PROTECTION START HERE





INTRODUCTION

In a study concerning burn care professionals, 55 percent said they were only likely to discuss sexuality and intimacy if the patient/partner initiated the discussion.¹

How well you and your doctor communicate with each other is one of the most important aspects of getting good health care.² A breakdown in communication on either side may result in your becoming dissatisfied with your care or progress. The big dilemma with intimacy concerns is that you may feel uneasy, uncomfortable, or embarrassed addressing them with your doctor, and your doctor may be reluctant to initiate the conversation.

This guide encourages you to initiate the conversation by giving your doctor background information regarding your health, getting the answers to the questions that address your most salient concerns, ensuring you grasp the reasoning behind the decisions being made about your care, and tracking results to gauge your progress. Then you can use the information you collect to inform your questions during your next visit with your doctor.

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1. Talk With Your Doctor. Medline Plus. March 21, 2014.

Available at: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/talkingwithyourdoctor.html>. Accessed May 19, 2014.

2. Surgeon General's Family Health History Initiative. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Available at: <http://www.hhs.gov/familyhistory/>. Accessed May 19, 2014.



GIVE

Objectives:

- Document family health history
- Document personal health history
- Document all current medications
- Document symptoms and problems or side-effects

The “give” part of this process involves providing your doctor with all the background information you can regarding your wound, illness, or injury. The more your doctor knows, the better informed their decisions are regarding your plan for care. This includes family and personal health histories.

A recent survey found that 96 percent of Americans believe that knowing their family history is important. Yet, the same survey found that only one-third of Americans have ever tried to gather and write down their family’s health history.³ Make sure you arm your doctor with all the information they need to give you the best care possible.

Use the template on the following page to document your health information, such as:

- ▶ Complete family health history
- ▶ Complete personal health history
- ▶ A list of symptoms you are experiencing as a result of your wound, illness, injury, or treatment
- ▶ A list of all medications, including when and how often you take them, the dosage, etc. (includes prescribed medications, over the counter, and alternative)

Next, you’ll move to getting the answers to your questions through consideration, preparation, and motivation.

3. Surgeon General’s Family Health History Initiative. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Available at: <http://www.hhs.gov/familyhistory/>. Accessed May 19, 2014.

PERSONAL HEALTH HISTORY

FAMILY HEALTH HISTORY

MEDICATIONS

SYMPTOMS



GET

Objectives:

- Consider the impact of your wound, illness, or injury on intimacy
- Formulate the questions you want to ask your doctor
- Use the sample questions to help get you started, if necessary
- Ask your questions and get your answers

The “get” part of the process involves obtaining answers to the questions that are most important to you. Building off of your personal and family health histories, and medication and symptoms lists, think about what you want to ask your doctor. Consider the impact of your wound, illness, injury, or any associated treatments on your ability or desire to be intimate. List your questions on the next page.

Prioritize your questions, if necessary. Have in mind your top three and bring them with you to your appointment. Remember, doctors’ visits are generally fairly short; around 15 minutes. Your time may be limited, so use it wisely.

Get motivated by taking an active role in your health care. Ask your questions and listen carefully to your doctor’s responses; consider writing down the responses.

Next, you’ll move to ensuring you grasp the answers you’ve been given.

QUESTION PREP

Use the following questions as examples to help you build your own specific questions. Write your draft questions below and then capture your final questions in the doctor visit and question log located in the “Gauge” section.

PHYSICAL WOUNDS

Draft Questions

- Is sex possible for me?
- What can be done about pain, numbness, or sensitivity to touch?
- Are the adverse sexual effects temporary or permanent?

PSYCHOLOGICAL WOUNDS

Draft Questions

- How do behavior and emotions affect intimacy?
- How do I cope with body image concerns?
- How do depression, anxiety, and stress affect intimacy?

ILLNESS

Draft Questions

- Will treatment for my illness affect my ability or desire to be intimate?
- Is there a way to minimize fatigue caused by treatment?
- Is there a way to mitigate nausea?

MEDICATION

Draft Questions

- Is this medication known to have adverse sexual effects?
- Can I change to another medication with fewer side effects?
- Can I go on a lower dosage of the medication to minimize the side-effects?



GRASP

Objectives:

- Make sure you get it before you get out
- Acknowledge what you've been told
- Repeat it back to your doctor in their words
- Paraphrase by putting their response into your own words

Acknowledge, repeat, and paraphrase are three ways to help gauge understanding. The final step is the key indicator of understanding, as being able to put something in your own words and accurately capture the meaning of the messages demonstrates comprehension.

Understand why certain decisions are being made and what the impacts are. If your medication is changing, why is it? If you are undergoing a certain treatment, such as chemotherapy, is it necessary, are there any alternatives, and what are the side-effects?

To paraphrase, state in your own words, the information given to you regarding your intimacy concerns. Ask your doctor if you are correct. If you are not, ask them to provide more detail or explain it in a different way to help you understand. Continue this process until you feel confident that you grasp the provided information.⁴

Next, you'll move into gauging progress.

4. After Your Appointment: Questions Are the Answer. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. September 2012. Available at: <http://www.ahrq.gov/patients-consumers/patient-involvement/ask-your-doctor/questions-after-appointment.html>. Accessed June 02, 2014.

NOTES



GAUGE

Objectives:

- Document your questions
- Document the answers
- Document any future actions
- Track your symptoms based on new or continued course of action

You can't measure progress unless you know where you started. Review your draft questions from the "Get" section and document your final questions in the doctor visit and questions log on the next page.

Your questions provide a record of where you are now, the answers you receive, and any next steps, and notes you make indicate progress, whether positive or negative.

Capture in the notes column any side-effects or new concerns you have based on the results of your most recent doctor visit. Use this information to help inform if or when you need to see your doctor again.

In some cases, you may have additional questions or need more information. Call your doctor's office or schedule an appointment if:

- ▶ You have more questions.
- ▶ You feel worse.
- ▶ You have problems with your medicines.
- ▶ You have not gotten your test results.⁴

The doctor's goal is to improve your health and provide quality medical care. You can help them accomplish this goal by keeping a detailed account of the plan of action you have agreed upon and any new or additional concerns that you have regarding your treatment.

4. After Your Appointment: Questions Are the Answer. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. September 2012. Available at: <http://www.ahrq.gov/patients-consumers/patient-involvement/ask-your-doctor/questions-after-appointment.html>. Accessed June 02, 2014.

DOCTOR VISIT & QUESTION LOG

Capture your final questions below and print off a copy of the log to take with you to your doctor visit. Write the answers to your questions in the appropriate space. Also, document any follow up actions or next steps.

Date |

Doctor |

Reason for Visit

Questions to Ask

Answers

Next Steps

Notes

Date |

Doctor |

Reason for Visit

Questions to Ask

Answers

Next Steps

Notes

DOCTOR VISIT & QUESTION LOG

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Date |

Doctor |

Reason for Visit

Questions to Ask

Answers

Next Steps

Notes

Date |

Doctor |

Reason for Visit

Questions to Ask

Answers

Next Steps

Notes



RESOURCES

Quick Tips - When Talking with Your Doctor:

<http://www.ahrq.gov/patients-consumers/diagnosis-treatment/diagnosis/doctalk/index.html>

After Your Appointment: Questions Are the Answer:

<http://www.ahrq.gov/patients-consumers/patient-involvement/ask-your-doctor/questions-after-appointment.html>



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