Have you ever left the doctor's office a little confused? What did she say about the doohickey that's wrong with me? Oh, and what was that test thingamajig for again? We've all been there. It's especially hard to remember what to ask. So we've enlisted the help of Drs. Mehmet C. Oz and Michael F. Roizen, the authors of the best-selling book YOU: The Smart Patient.

**Doctor's visit checklist**

Before your appointment with the doctor, be certain you have everything you need. Even if your visit is a routine checkup, review this checklist before any doctor's appointment to avoid missing anything.

Materials that you need for a doctor's visit:
- Insurance card/information
- Health profile/history
- Medication list
- Questions on any new symptoms, treatments or conditions

Questions:
1. How's my health overall?
2. Are you concerned about any aspect of my health? Which one(s) and why?
3. Are there any tests I should have based on my age or for other reasons?
4. Do you have any recommendations about lifestyle modifications I should make, such as exercise, quitting smoking or changing my diet?

**Diagnosis Checklist**

If your doctor diagnoses you with any problem, get the full facts by ticking off these questions:
1. Please explain my condition. How was it diagnosed?
2. What does this condition mean for my overall health?
3. Can it be treated? Does it have to be treated? What happens if I don't get it treated?
4. Should you conduct further tests to confirm the diagnosis?
5. What kinds of treatment options do I have? What are the pros and cons of each?
6. What are the benefits of seeking a second opinion?
7. How can I find out more information about this condition or disease?
8. Is there anything I can do to help control the condition?
9. Are there any clinical trials under way for this condition or disease?

**Prescription Checklist**

Ask your doctor these questions every time she prescribes a new medication:
1. What is this medicine for? (Consider giving each drug its own index card.)
2. Does this medication replace anything else I'm taking?
3. How do I take the medication? (For example, with food or on an empty stomach?)
4. How long do I take the medication?

5. What side effects can this drug cause, and how common are they? Which ones are the most dangerous?
6. How long have you been prescribing this drug for my condition? Are there any other medications for my condition that have been FDA approved more recently? If so, why is this drug the best choice?
7. Is this medication safe to take with other medicines or dietary supplements I am taking?
**Test Checklist**

Your doctor wants you to have an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) or a CT (computed tomography) scan, or some other test that goes by some other impenetrable name.

But before you run off, ask these questions:

1. What does this test measure?
2. Why do I need it?
3. What could happen if I don’t have the test?
4. Are there any test alternatives?
5. Will my health insurance pay the total cost for this test? If not, how much will it cost?
6. How accurate is the test?
7. How is the test performed?
8. What kind of pain or “discomfort” is involved?
9. How should I prepare for the test?
10. How will I feel after the test? (Can I return to work immediately? Etc.)
11. When will I get the results?
12. Which lab is processing the test, and why did you choose that one? (Check to see if the lab is accredited by The Joint Commission at www.jcaho.org or by the College of American Pathologists at www.cap.org.)
13. After taking the test and getting the results, what’s the next step?

**Doctor Info**

Name: ______________________________________

Phone #: ________________________________

14. Notes

**Surgery Checklist**

When your doctor says, “You need surgery,” that’s your cue to find out every pertinent detail. Be inquisitive and be thorough, with a notebook, tape recorder and your health care advocate right by your side. Here are the key questions you should ask before undergoing any surgery:

1. Can you review in layman’s terms why I need this surgery?
2. What will happen if I don’t have it done?
3. What are the alternatives to surgery, and the pros and cons of each?
4. What are the risks of the surgery?
5. Where is the absolute best place to have this done besides here?
6. How many of these specific surgeries does this hospital do a year? How many times have you performed this procedure?
7. How do your results in this operation compare with those of other surgeons?
8. How long will I be in the hospital?
9. Is it possible to do this on an outpatient basis, and if so, would that be smart?
10. Can this be done under local anesthesia instead of general?
11. What kinds of complications do your patients most frequently experience from this surgery?
12. What should I do and not do immediately before and after surgery? (Find out about food, alcohol, medications, sex, exercise and other activities.)
13. How much pain will I be in after surgery? What painkillers will I be given during and after surgery?
14. How long will I be laid up after this surgery—meaning, flat on my back—or really unable to get around easily?
15. Whom should I call after surgery if I have questions, or if I experience something unexpected?

**Discharge Checklist**

Make sure you review your discharge plan with both your in-hospital doctor (who’s either a hospitalist, a specialist or your surgeon) and your primary care doctor so each knows the plan. Your advocate should be at your side when you ask these questions, taking copious notes or tape-recording the conversation. In addition to any specific questions relating to your case, don’t forget to get answers to these essential questions:

1. How can I expect to feel in the coming days?
2. What kinds of danger signs or complications should I watch for? How often do these kinds of complications occur?
3. If I experience pain, what should I do? What kind of pain medication can I take?
4. Do I need to follow a special diet at home? Any foods to avoid? No alcohol?
5. Will I need any outpatient therapy? What kind? How will it be scheduled?
6. What activities should I avoid at home?
7. When can I return to work or school?
8. When can I drive again?
9. When can I resume sexual activity, workout routine, etc.?
10. Can I take a shower and/or bath when I get home?
11. How should I prepare for the test?
12. How much pain will I be in after surgery? What painkillers will I be given during and after surgery?
13. What kinds of complications do your patients most frequently experience from this surgery?
14. What should I do and not do immediately before and after surgery? (Find out about food, alcohol, medications, sex, exercise and other activities.)
15. How much pain will I be in after surgery? What painkillers will I be given during and after surgery?
16. How long will I be laid up after this surgery—meaning, flat on my back—or really unable to get around easily?
17. Whom should I call after surgery if I have questions, or if I experience something unexpected?

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