When You Leave an Appointment With More Questions

Practical steps for clarification & follow-up

For adults at every stage of adulthood - and the people supporting them.

Sometimes the questions come after you leave. You may remember something you meant to ask, feel unsure about an instruction or realize you do not know what happens next. Asking for clarification is a reasonable part of being involved in your care.

1. Write down what you understand - and what is unclear

Review any notes or written instructions you received. Make a short list of what was discussed, what you were asked to do and what still needs an explanation. Separate instructions you have confirmed from details you are unsure about.

> Start with the question that most affects your next step. For example: “I understand I need a test, but who books it?”

2. Contact the right person

Call the clinic or use its approved communication method. Explain that you are following up on a recent appointment. Ask whether your question can be answered by the care team or requires another appointment. For questions about how to take a medicine, contact your pharmacist or prescriber.

Share when the appointment occurred, the question you need answered and any relevant deadline. Ask when to expect a reply and what to do if you have not heard back.

3. Ask for an explanation you can use

You can ask for plain language, written instructions, an interpreter or another accessible format. Repeat the plan in your own words and ask whether you have understood it correctly.

> “Could you explain what this means for me?”
> “What should I do first, and by when?”
> “Who should I contact if I have trouble following this plan?”

If medicine instructions are unclear or seem to conflict, ask your pharmacist or prescriber to clarify before guessing or making changes yourself.

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Turn Questions Into Next Steps

Keep the plan clear, connected and manageable

4. Confirm tests, referrals and follow-up

Ask who is arranging each appointment or test, when you should expect contact and whom to call if it does not happen. Clarify who will review results and how you will receive them. Do not assume that no news means no follow-up is needed.

Keep a simple record: the task, the person or clinic responsible, the expected date and your next action. Note the date and outcome of follow-up calls.

5. Bring someone alongside you if you want support

A friend, family member or chosen support person can help organize questions, take notes or join a follow-up conversation. Tell them what help you want and what you prefer to handle yourself. Ask the clinic about consent arrangements before someone contacts it on your behalf.

If no one is available, ask your clinic about support options or explore professional care navigation. You can seek help with one appointment or one practical task.

When a question needs timely attention

If your symptoms change or worsen, contact an appropriate healthcare provider rather than waiting for routine administrative follow-up. Follow any urgent-care instructions your team has given you. For an emergency, call 911.

How Aging Well can help

Karen Davis, Registered Social Worker and Founder of Aging Well Care Navigation, helps adults and families prepare questions, organize appointment information, coordinate practical arrangements and follow through on agreed next steps in Calgary and surrounding communities.

With your consent, support can include attending appointments and helping communicate questions to your care team. Medical explanations, treatment decisions and medication advice remain with your healthcare professionals.

Request a complimentary 30-minute consultation
Telephone or Google Meet | 403-830-3301
agingwellcalgary.com/contact | hello@agingwellcalgary.com

For your next visit, download Preparing for Your Next Appointment from agingwellcalgary.com/free-resources.

General planning information; not a substitute for individualized healthcare advice. Further reading: Alberta Health Advocate - Resources, alberta.ca/alberta-health-advocate-resources; MyHealth.Alberta.ca, Making the Most of Your Appointment (search hw226888). Reviewed November 2026.

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