

Three Questions That Change Every Appointment

Public education content for shared waiting-area screens and printed cards

ASKING QUESTIONS IS NOT BEING DIFFICULT

Clinicians consistently report that the visits that go best are the ones where the patient asked for something to be explained again.

AUDIENCE All patients and companions	READING LEVEL TARGET 6th–8th grade	CHANNELS Waiting screens, printed cards, portal	CONTAINS PATIENT DATA No — public content only
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THE THREE QUESTIONS

#	ASK THIS	WHY IT WORKS	ASK IT ABOUT
1	What is my main problem?	Gets you a name for what is happening, in words you can repeat to someone else and look up later.	A new diagnosis, an unexplained symptom, a test result
2	What do I need to do?	Turns advice into a specific action with a time attached. “Take this twice a day with food, starting tonight” is usable. “Manage your blood pressure” is not.	A new medicine, a change in treatment, a referral, a test
3	Why is it important that I do this?	People follow through on instructions they understand the reason for. This is the question patients skip most often and the one clinicians most want to answer.	Anything you are unsure you will actually do

FOUR MORE THAT ARE WORTH THE TIME

- Can you say that again in simpler words? Clinicians use technical language without noticing. They are not offended by being asked.
- What should I watch for, and who do I call? Ask for the specific sign and the specific number, not a general reassurance.
- When will I know if this is working, and what if it is not?
- What are my options, including doing nothing right now?

MAKING IT EASIER FOR YOURSELF

BEFORE THE VISIT	DURING THE VISIT	BEFORE YOU LEAVE
Write your questions down and put the most important one first	Ask your most important question first, not last	Repeat the plan back in your own words
Bring your medicine bottles	Say “I’m not following” the moment it happens, rather than at the end	Confirm what happens next and who is responsible for it
Bring someone with you if that helps you remember	Take notes, or ask if you can record the instructions	Make sure you know which number to call, and when
Ask for an interpreter when you book — it is free	Ask for written instructions if there are several steps	Ask when you should be seen again

Free help: Free interpreter services and materials in other formats are available at no cost. Ask at the front desk or call 555-0300.

Note: This is general education for a shared public screen. It is not advice about your condition and it does not recommend any test, treatment, or medicine. Talk with your own clinician.

FICTIONAL SPECIMEN. Cedar Point Community Health and this content item are invented for demonstration only. The themes reflect widely published patient-engagement guidance, but this is not medical advice and not a real organizational document.