

Health Awareness

Straight Talk About Pain: Arm Yourself With Information To Better Communicate At The Doctor's Office

(NAPSA)—Time with doctors is precious today, which can make it especially challenging for those with chronic pain—an often complicated condition without easily measurable signs or visible symptoms. But undertreated or untreated pain can result in suffering, inability to take part in everyday activities, trouble sleeping, even anxiety or depression.

Clear communication with your physician is vital in receiving proper diagnosis and effective treatment for pain. Patients who are informed and prepared will have more productive medical visits—by relaying critical details and asking the right questions. *Partners Against Pain*® is a resource that can help people address these challenges with tools and information that can prepare you for your next doctor appointment.

For example, the patient is the only one who knows how much pain he or she is feeling, so documenting pain as it happens may help convey how you feel to your doctor. Go to www.partnersagainstpain.com to download a free assessment guide.

Other steps you can take to prepare you to talk to your doctor about pain and improve the outcome include:

1. Tell your doctor why you are there. At the beginning of the appointment, clearly describe your pain symptoms and any related



A free assessment guide to help convey pain to your doctor can be found at a helpful Web site.

symptoms such as nausea, lack of appetite, and difficulty sleeping. In addition, tell your doctor if the pain interferes with activities—at home, at work, or regarding leisure activities—and whether the pain has affected your mood.

2. Show your doctor where it hurts. Be as specific as you can: Tell your doctor if it hurts in one particular spot or over a region of your body.

3. Describe your pain with adjectives. Only you know how your pain feels, but you can better help your doctor understand by using words such as aching, throbbing, shooting, stabbing, gnawing, sharp, tender, burning, exhausting, penetrating, nagging, numb and unbearable.

4. Rate the severity of pain on a scale. Use a scale of zero to 10, with zero being no pain and 10

being the worst pain you can imagine. Rate your pain for a period of time before the doctor visit, noting for each time frame when it's worst and best.

5. Provide information about when and how long your pain continues. Tell your doctor if your pain is continuous, periodic or occasional. Recall the time of day when your pain is the worst and best and if it is triggered or helped by particular activities—even simple things like standing, walking, getting in/out of a car, etc.

6. Devise a treatment plan with your doctor. Treatment varies; your doctor may recommend treatment like massage or yoga and can also prescribe medications to help the pain. Every patient has unique needs, so adjusting the plan with your doctor is essential to pain management.

7. Speak up. If prescribed medicine isn't helping, talk with your doctor about different treatment options and adjust your plan accordingly. Your symptoms are real and you deserve to have your pain relieved.

Partners Against Pain® is a resource that serves patients, caregivers and health care professionals to help alleviate unnecessary suffering by advancing standards of pain care through education and advocacy. For more information on pain assessment and treatment options, visit www.partnersagainstpain.com.