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The following slides were presented during the educational portion of IFFGD's 2020 Virtual Advocacy Event. To view this presentation and the all videos available during this program, please visit https://bit.ly/Adv_Edu.

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**What to ask your healthcare provider before you leave -
what questions should you be sure to ask?**

What do healthcare providers wish people would ask?

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Before you leave the office (telemedicine) visit *Objectives*

- Confirm your diagnosis
- Verify the evaluation and treatment plan, expectations
- Clarify the next steps/milestones
- Define the communication and follow-up strategy
- Solidify your patient-physician relationship

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**What to ask your healthcare provider before you leave -
what questions should you be sure to ask?**



- 1. Diagnosis and Testing***
- 2. Treatment and Follow-up***

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What to ask your healthcare provider before you leave - what questions should you be sure to ask?

Diagnosis and Testing

1. "What is my *diagnosis*?"

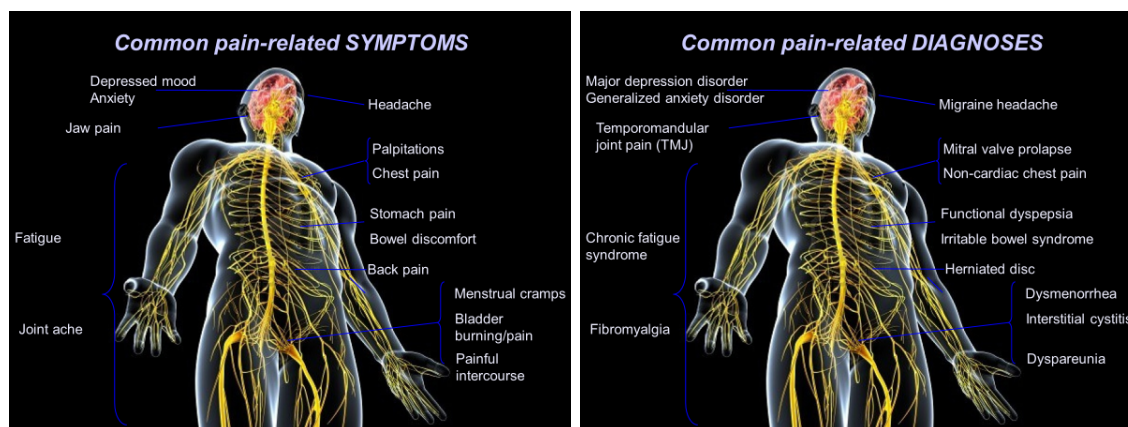
➤ *Symptoms* are not *Diagnoses*

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Symptoms vs. Diagnoses



Why is this distinction important?

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What to ask your healthcare provider before you leave - what questions should you be sure to ask?

Diagnosis and Testing

1. “What is my *diagnosis*?”

- Symptoms are not Diagnoses
- Patients given a formal diagnosis are more likely to receive effective, evidence based-treatments*
- Facilitates learning more about your condition
- It is OK to not be 100% certain at the initial visit
- “Are there other/additional diagnoses that you are still considering?”

* Sayuk GS, Wolf R, Chang L. [Comparison of Symptoms, Healthcare Utilization, and Treatment in Diagnosed and Undiagnosed Individuals With Diarrhea-Predominant Irritable Bowel Syndrome](#). Am J Gastroenterol. 2017 Jun;112(6):892-899

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- “Are there other/additional diagnoses that you are still considering?”

2. “When and how will I receive my *test results*?”

- Should you expect a call or mailed results?
- Understand whether your provider participates in a patient portal system
- Never assume that “no news is good news”

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- Should you expect a call or mailed results?
- Understand whether your provider participates in a patient portal
- Never assume that "no news is good news"

3. "How do I best communicate with you and your office"?

- Learn the name(s) of nursing and support staff
- **"Is it possible to speak directly with you in the event of questions/concerns?"**
- Use of an instant messaging system?

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What to ask your healthcare provider before you leave - what questions should you be sure to ask?

Treatment and Follow-up

1. "What are the expectations for this treatment plan?"

"Which of my symptoms are expected to improve?"

- Some treatments may more effectively address certain dimensions of the underlying disorder
- Treatment may not eliminate symptoms, but often make them less severe or less bothersome
- Most treatments for FGID do not offer prospect of a "cure"

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2. "How long will it take to gain a sense of whether this treatment option is effective/right for me?"

- Some symptoms may respond more quickly than others
- **"What is the expected timeline for response?"**
- Understand the options for dose adjustments/adjunct therapies

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What to ask your healthcare provider before you leave - what questions should you be sure to ask?

Treatment and Follow-up

3. "What are the side effects/adverse reactions I should watch out for"?

- Would these be expected to occur immediately?
- Will they likely get better if I do experience them?
- What should I do if I experience adverse effects (stop, adjust, call)?

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Treatment and Follow-up

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- What should I do if I experience adverse effects (stop, adjust, call)?

4. “What are the next steps/milestones to monitor after today’s visit?”

- Clarify the follow-up plan and timeline

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“What do healthcare providers wish people would *ask*?”

1. “Let me make sure I understand the diagnosis and plan”

- Opportunity to make sure you and your provider are on the same page
- Take notes!

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“What do healthcare providers wish people would *ask*?”

1. “Let me make sure I understand the diagnosis and plan”

- Opportunity to make sure you and your provider are on the same page
- Take notes!

2. “Is there anything else *I can do* to help control my symptoms?”

- Allopathic providers (traditional medicine) often focus heavily on medical therapies
- Diet, sleep, exercise, and stress management all have proven benefit in improving many symptoms, such as pain

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“What do healthcare providers wish people would *ask*?”

3. “Is it useful for me to track my diet, symptoms, etc?”

4. “What are the best sources of information to learn more about my condition?”

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“What do healthcare providers wish people would say?”

“I trust your opinion and your recommendations”.

- Providers who feel trusted will work harder to earn/keep that trust

“I understand that this is a chronic condition, and it will take time to get better”.

“ I don’t expect to be perfect. I just want to feel/function better than I am right now”.

- Demonstrate realistic expectations (timeline and overall response)

“I am going to work with you to get better”.

- Affirm your therapeutic alliance with your provider

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In conclusion...

Your *best chance* in getting the *best healthcare* will come from you knowing:

1. What it is you want (*introspection*)
2. Where to go to get it (*research*)
3. How to ask for it (*self advocacy*)

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