



Prepare for your next doctor's appointment like a pro! It may actually help your doctor better manage your lupus.

Step 1

Mark your get-ready date.

Find the date of your next doctor's appointment on your calendar. Then find the date that is 3 weeks before your appointment. Circle that date as your get-ready starting point.

My next appointment: _____

My get-ready date: _____

You can continue to review the remaining steps of preparing for your next appointment now if you like. Or wait until your get-ready date arrives and pick them up from here!

Step 2

Choose your appointment buddy.

This is a trusted friend or family member who will help you with important tasks, such as taking notes, during your appointment so you can be free to talk with your doctor.

A good appointment buddy is someone who is non-judgmental and who can be trusted to keep your medical information private. You might also need someone who can help you remember important questions or offer another point of view on how you're doing.

Your appointment buddy could serve as your:

- Advocate
- Extra pair of eyes and ears
- Note-taker
- All of the above

Have someone in mind? Great! What's next?

- Ask them now to make sure they're available!
- Make sure you are clear about what you need during the appointment.

My appointment buddy: _____



Step 3

Gather your medical records for your doctor.

- Find copies of your medical records or any appointment notes **since your last visit** to this doctor.
- If you've had **other medical appointments** in the meantime, be sure to bring any papers that recap those visits. (The office staff will often give you these as you are leaving.) Also, be sure to bring a list of all the medicines you take, including prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, vitamins, and herbal supplements.
- If your doctors are in hospital-based practices, **call the office staff** to make sure they have all the information they need from your other doctors (within the same hospital system or otherwise).
- If you've been to an **urgent care center or emergency room** since your last visit with this doctor, be sure to take copies of those records.

Jot down your list of any medical records you need to gather before your appointment:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Step 4

Take note of all your symptoms.

Sharing as much as you can about your symptoms is an important part of working effectively with your doctor. It's up to you to document what's going on with your body between appointments.

Use the [Lupus Checklist](#) to help you remember and share all your symptoms with your doctor.

A few tips on symptom tracking:

- It's okay if you're not sure whether a symptom is related to lupus. Use the Lupus Checklist and mark anything and everything you're feeling.
- Don't let symptom tracking overwhelm you or "freak you out." Sometimes, writing it all down can make things seem worse than they really are. Remember, this is good information to help your doctor help you. So don't let it upset you.
- If you're having a symptom that requires emergency treatment, by all means, call 911 or your doctor **right away**.

If you're already using a health journal or an app to track your symptoms, great! Make sure you have the information in a format that's easy to share with your doctor when the time comes.



Step 5

Document how lupus is affecting your life.

Symptom tracking is important, but it's not the whole picture. Your doctor also needs to know how lupus is affecting your life. Even if your symptoms haven't changed much (for example, you're still having joint pain), you still need to let your doctor know if a symptom is making it harder to get through the day.

The [Lupus Impact Tracker™](#) is a helpful tool for understanding how much lupus may be interfering with your day-to-day life. Complete this tracker now in preparation for your appointment, and make a note on your calendar to complete the tracker every 4 weeks.

Seeing how lupus is affecting you over time will help you and your doctor evaluate whether you need to adjust your treatment plan, see a specialist, etc.

Step 6

Be ready to answer the most common physician questions.

When your doctor asks how you're doing, they're ready to hear **the details of your lupus** since your last appointment. Your healthcare provider needs to know specifics! When they ask how you've been doing, they don't expect a one-sentence answer.

Page 4 of this worksheet will help you get your responses ready, so make sure you print that page and take it with you!

Step 7

List your questions and concerns.

Have you ever thought of something you wanted to ask your doctor right after they left the room? Taking the time to **write down all your questions and concerns ahead of time** will ensure that you get the answers you need to take good care of yourself until your next visit.

Page 4 of this worksheet can help with that, too! Take a few moments to respond to the prompts and you'll be ready for a truly productive visit with your doctor.

Make the most of this exercise

Your time with your doctor is probably limited, so **practice summarizing your main symptoms, concerns and questions**. Rehearse them in front of the mirror, or even better, with a trusted friend or your appointment buddy.

Being direct and to the point is valuable, but it can be challenging! Try these tips to help you keep it brief but informative for your doctor:

- Practice, practice, practice!
- Keep each point under 90 seconds.
- Use the tools referenced in this worksheet to organize your thoughts.

It may seem hard to believe, but practicing your communication skills may be the most valuable part of preparing for your doctor's appointment.

Think about it: If communication is the lifeblood of good relationships, doesn't that hold true for the partnership with your doctor?



Answers to My Doctor's Questions *(Print this page to fill out and bring to your next appointment.)*

Start by preparing your answers to the questions your doctor is most likely to ask.

How have you been feeling physically?

How have you been feeling emotionally?

Anything significant in your life I should know about?

Any new problems I should be aware of? It's okay if you're not sure if something is lupus-related.

If your doctor routinely asks you any other questions, go ahead and jot those down here with your answers:

Questions and Concerns to Share With My Doctor

These prompts can help you remember everything you want to discuss. Write it out here, keep it brief and clear, and don't save it until the doctor is walking out the door.

What are the most important things I need to tell my doctor?

What symptoms are worrying me the most?

What symptoms are interfering with my life the most?

Other questions and concerns: For example: "I've noticed that I'm losing a lot of hair again. Does that mean my lupus is getting worse?"

→ **Ready for more?**

Go to usinlupus.com/SOLNeeds to download the next activity: "Sorting Out Wants and Needs."