

Bowel Incontinence Discussion Guide

Bowel incontinence can be difficult to talk about, but discussing your condition with your doctor is the surest way to get the treatment you deserve. There are proven, effective treatments available right now, no matter how mild or severe your symptoms are, so you shouldn't let a little embarrassment get in the way of your care.

That's why we've put together this discussion guide. It's designed to help you open up with your doctor, answer your most important questions and give your physician insight that will help in the diagnostic process. Here's a list of questions that will make for a more productive consultation – and don't be afraid to take notes when you discuss them with your doctor so you don't forget anything:

BEFORE YOUR APPOINTMENT

- Do bladder or bowel control issues occupy your thoughts?
- Are you afraid of being too far away from a restroom?
- Do you turn down invitations from friends or family because you're afraid you'll experience incontinence?
- If you're already receiving treatment, is it helping you find the relief you need?

GENERAL QUESTIONS:

- What could be causing my symptoms?
- What tests do I need to take?
- Are there things I can do on my own to help improve my condition – diet, exercise or behavioral changes?
- How do conditions like mine typically progress?

TREATMENT-RELATED QUESTIONS:

- What types of treatment options are available?
- How effective are these treatment options? (Discuss the potential benefits of all options)
- What are the risks and side effects associated with these options? (Discuss the risks of all options)
- How does the treatment work?
- For medications, how am I supposed to take them (morning/evening, with/without food, etc.)? Are there any drug/food interactions I should avoid?

- How long should I expect to be on this treatment? Is it permanent or temporary?
- What can I expect from this treatment?

ADVANCED THERAPY AND SURGERY-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS:

- Can you explain what the procedure is?
- Is it in-office or does it require a hospital stay?
- Will I be under anesthesia? General or local?
- How long is the recovery period?
- Will I be limited in what I can do during recovery?
- What will the end results be – will I have to make lifestyle changes?
- What are the risks?
- What is follow-up like?
- Will this procedure ever have to be re-done?
- Is this procedure covered by my insurance?

EMOTIONALLY-FOCUSED QUESTIONS:

- Will the treatment/medication affect my mood?
- Can stress/anxiety play a role in my condition?
- What do you recommend to manage stress/anxiety?

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