

Medical Test Checklist

for Hospitalized Patients and their Caregivers to Support Diagnostic Excellence

When hospitalized, and your healthcare team is trying to figure out how to better understand and treat your condition, they may order several tests, like blood work, X-rays, or an MRI.

When patients, caregivers, and the healthcare team communicate openly, it can improve the time it takes to make a diagnosis and help avoid missed or wrong diagnoses. It is essential that everyone involved in your care feels comfortable asking questions and sharing their concerns.

The diagnostic process can be overwhelming and stressful. This checklist provides patients, families, and caregivers with tips and key questions to ask healthcare providers and empower patients as they go through the diagnostic process.



Remember, you are a key partner in the effort to improve diagnostic excellence. Don't be afraid to ask, understand, and confirm your test results and diagnosis!



When admitted (checked in) to the hospital:

- I confirmed the name is correct on my identification tag.
- I know the names of my attending physician and the nurses caring for me.
 - *Names may be on signs in your room. If you do not see them, ask.*
- I have access to the electronic health records and online portal. My medical and medication history is up to date.
- I asked for a translator (if needed).
- I have a plan for remembering conversations with my provider.
 - *Create a folder or journal to keep notes and test results, especially if your hospital stay lasts longer than a few days.*
- I asked the healthcare team if they use shared care plans to decide on my care and tests together.
- I know how to alert the healthcare team about changes in my condition.
- I feel like my healthcare team, and I are working together.

What is a diagnosis?

A diagnosis is the process of identifying a disease, condition, or injury based on its signs and symptoms.

The healthcare team uses medical tests to help make a diagnosis and understand a health problem. Use this checklist when you have medical tests done, such as:

- Laboratory tests like having bloodwork done or giving urine samples.
- Imaging tests like X-rays, MRIs, ultrasounds, CT scans, or mammography.
- An endoscopy, using an instrument to look inside your body, such as a colonoscopy.
- A biopsy, taking a tissue sample from your body, such as bone marrow, skin, or breast biopsy.



Before a medical test:

- I answered my provider's questions.
 - *Provide your story fully and completely. Be honest, even if embarrassed or scared.*
- I asked my own questions and understood the next steps. Before getting a test, consider asking:
 - **Why do I need this test? Is this a routine test or related to a specific concern?**
 - **How soon should I have it completed?**
 - **Who will schedule this test?**
 - **Is there anything that I should do to prepare for this test?**
 - **Are there educational print materials to read or videos to watch prior to the test?**
 - **When will the test results be ready, and how will you notify me?**
 - **Will someone be able to explain the results to me? Can I have a summary of the test results?**
- I am keeping a checklist of tests for my records.

I'm the caregiver. How can I help my loved one?

- Use this checklist to ensure your loved one gets the best diagnosis and care.
- Be part of the healthcare team. Know the attending physician's name and get to know the nurses and staff caring for your loved one.
- Create a folder or journal to keep notes and test results. Your loved one may have questions later about the decisions made. Ask for access to the patient portal
- Help plan for care and tests with the patient and their healthcare provider.
- Be the patient's voice when needed. Ask questions. Advocate for results. Complete after-visit surveys.



After medical test results are available:

- I discussed my results with the attending physician and/or the treating specialist and understand the results.
 - *If your provider does not share your test results within the expected timeframe, ask them directly.*
 - *Remember to review your test results on your patient portal and discuss them with your provider.*
 - *If you are uncertain or do not understand the results, ask your provider to explain the results in a different way.*
 - *Your healthcare provider may ask you to get follow-up tests. Make sure you understand why you need each additional test, who will schedule them, and when.*
- I asked if I have received the complete set of results or if additional results will come later.



At discharge (check out) from the hospital:

- I asked what the follow up-plan is and received detailed information, including what's next for treatment, testing, or other follow-ups.
- I know how to track my medications, access general health information, and request health education materials.
- I will continue to monitor my health and notify my provider of any changes.
 - *If you need to get testing done outside of the hospital (e.g., as part of your discharge or follow-up care), schedule it as soon as possible. Ask how. If your test is not scheduled within one week, call your provider's office.*
- I saved my test results for quick access – they may be helpful during your care in the future.
- I understand that if there are any doubts or uncertainties about the diagnosis, it is okay to seek a second opinion.
- I helped improve the diagnostic process by reflecting on my experiences and suggesting improvements, for example, in after-visit surveys.