



How to get the most out of your medical appointments



Lifespan Cardiovascular Institute

Rhode Island Hospital • The Miriam Hospital
Newport Hospital

Delivering health with care.®

Center For Cardiac Fitness

Pulmonary Rehab Program

The Miriam Hospital

Objectives

- Discuss who works in the typical doctors office
- Discuss things you can do as a patient (and what we can do as physicians) to make the most of your appointments
- Answer questions about what happens behind the scenes at your doctor's office

Who works at my office?

Administrative Assistants

Office managers

Respiratory therapists



Nurses

Medical assistants

Physicians

Nurse Practitioners

What is my day like?

The screenshot displays the Microsoft Outlook calendar interface for the week of May 24-30, 2015. The interface includes a navigation pane on the left with a calendar view for the month of May, a task pane with options for My Calendars, Other Calendars, and Shared Calendars, and a main calendar area showing a weekly grid. The calendar is populated with numerous appointments, including conferences, clinics, and services. The appointments are as follows:

Day	Time	Appointment
Monday, May 25	6:00 am - 7:00 am	Thoracic Tumor Conference
Monday, May 25	8:00 am - 9:00 am	Bronchoscopy
Monday, May 25	9:00 am - 10:00 am	Thoracic Oncology Clinic
Monday, May 25	12:00 pm - 1:00 pm	Pulmonary Research Conference APC 702
Monday, May 25	2:00 pm - 3:00 pm	CCM Conference TBD
Monday, May 25	4:00 pm - 5:00 pm	Pulmonary rehab
Tuesday, May 26	8:00 am - 8:00 am	Thoracentesis TMH
Tuesday, May 26	11:00 am - 11:30 am	Thoracic oncology conference RHH
Tuesday, May 26	1:00 pm - 3:00 pm	Pleural Cath Procedure Go Live Meeting - Tuesday, 5/26/15 @ 11:00 a.m. - 3N
Tuesday, May 26	3:00 pm - 4:00 pm	Pulmonary rehab
Wednesday, May 27	8:00 am - 8:00 am	Clinic APC 7
Wednesday, May 27	1:00 pm - 2:00 pm	Lung Cancer Screening Clinic TMH
Wednesday, May 27	3:00 pm - 4:00 pm	CCM Conference TBD
Thursday, May 28	8:00 am - 9:00 am	Bronchoscopy TMH
Thursday, May 28	1:00 pm - 2:00 pm	Pleux reps
Thursday, May 28	2:00 pm - 3:00 pm	IP Clinic APC 7
Thursday, May 28	3:00 pm - 4:00 pm	MICU M&M MICU (APC702)
Thursday, May 28	4:00 pm - 5:00 pm	Fellow Teaching APC702
Thursday, May 28	5:00 pm - 6:00 pm	Radiology Conference (RHH) Main 3 - Room 351, Conference Room A
Friday, May 29	5:00 pm - 6:00 pm	Bronchoscopy
Friday, May 29	5:00 pm - 6:00 pm	Brown Chest Conference Room 291
Friday, May 29	5:00 pm - 6:00 pm	PULM and Clinical Comp Comm Evals Dr. Carino's office
Friday, May 29	5:00 pm - 6:00 pm	Lung Cancer Screening Clinic
Saturday, May 30	5:00 pm - 6:00 pm	TMH B SERVICE
Saturday, May 30	5:00 pm - 6:00 pm	TMH B
Saturday, May 30	5:00 pm - 6:00 pm	ASCO; Chicago

New appointments

- Generally 45 minute appointments
- Need to accomplish the following while you are in the office
 - Discuss your current symptoms
 - Discuss your medical history
 - Review your medications and allergies
 - Discuss possible occupational, travel related, home related exposures that might be affecting your symptoms
 - Discuss any medical problems that run in your family
 - Review your previous test results and imaging studies
 - Conduct a physical exam
 - Discuss recommendations and follow up plans
 - Order any lab tests, imaging studies and prescription medications
- After you leave
 - Write a note related to the visit
 - Communicate with your referring physician

Follow up visits

- Generally 15 minute appointments
- Need to accomplish the following while you are in the office
 - Discuss your current symptoms
 - Review any changes to your medications, allergies, exposures
 - Review any new test results
 - Conduct a physical exam
 - Discuss recommendations and follow up plans
 - Order any lab tests, imaging studies and prescription medications
- After you leave
 - Write a note related to the visit
 - Communicate with your referring physician

What do I do to prepare for your visit?

- Read everything that is available in the electronic medical record
 - Lifespan (EPIC)
 - University Medicine (ECW)
- Review any tests and images that you have had that are documented in the electronic medical record
 - Lifespan
 - RIMI
- Review anything that has been sent by your referring provider

What can you do to prepare for
your visit?

New appointments

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A list of your medical problems

- Any major illnesses that required medical care
- Anything that required you to be in the hospital
- Anything that required you to have surgery
- Anything that you are currently taking medication for
- If you have any question about whether it might be important write it down and let me decide!

A list of your medical problems

- Things patients sometimes forget
 - Major childhood illnesses
 - Ex. Bone marrow transplant
 - Medical conditions that are “controlled” with medications
 - Ex. Hypertension (if your blood pressure is controlled with medications you still have hypertension)

An updated list of your medications

- Every medication you take regularly or on an as needed basis
 - All prescription medications with names, doses and frequency
 - All over the counter medications
 - Herbal supplements
- Never assume your physician has a list of your medications!!!!

Why I can't guess your inhalers...

- Advair comes in three different strengths
- They are all purple!
- Proair is a short acting “rescue inhaler”
- Flovent is an inhaled steroid
- Symbicort is a combined steroid and long acting bronchodilator



A list of your allergies (and what happened)

- Drug allergies
 - Signs and symptoms often occur within an hour of taking the medication. Less commonly reactions can occur hours, days or weeks later
 - Symptoms include
 - Skin rash
 - Hives
 - Itching
 - Fever
 - Swelling
 - Shortness of breath
 - Wheezing
 - Itchy eyes
 - Anaphylaxis

A list of your allergies (and what happened)

- Drug side effects
 - Not the same as drug allergies
 - Known effects of the drug that are listed on the package
 - Examples:
 - Nausea, vomiting
 - Sleepiness
 - Dry eyes, mouth
 - Urinary retention

Why are your allergies are so important?

- If you have a true drug allergy to a specific medication prescribing that drug (or any drug in a related class) could be potentially dangerous
 - Often drug reactions are more severe when you are re-exposed to the drug you are allergic to
- If you develop a condition for which a drug you have listed as an allergy is the best possible medication for that condition we will try to treat the condition with the “next best” medication
 - The “next best” medication may be far inferior
 - The “next best” medication may have significant side effects

What has not worked in the past?

- What medications and treatments have you tried for your symptoms in the past
 - When did you try them?
 - How long did you try them for?
 - It is very important that you let your doctor know if you were prescribed a medication but did not actually take it or only took it for a few days
 - Did you have side effects?
 - Were you not able to obtain the prescription due to costs or other reasons?

A list of your current doctors

- Who are your doctors and what do they treat you for?
- Who should receive a copy of the note from this visit?

Surgeries/Hospitalizations?

- What surgeries have you had in the past?
- Have you needed to be hospitalized recently?
 - If so what hospital?
 - What kinds of tests did they do (so I can track down the results!).

Images/Test Results

- I have access to results that were performed at a lifespan hospital (Rhode Island Hospital, Miriam Hospital or Newport Hospital)
- I can also access images that were performed at RIMI (RI medical imaging)
- If you have images performed at other hospitals its always a good idea to ask that a copy be made on a CD so that you can bring them to your appointment
 - Its often useful to compare recent images to those you have had in the past
 - We also want to avoid repeating tests accidentally

What is happening now/What has happened since I last saw you?

- For most visits this is the most important thing I want us to be able to talk about!!!
- The less time we spend going over the other stuff the more time we have to focus on all the details I can't learn by reading about you in a medical chart or looking at pictures

What happens after your visit?

- I write a note about what we discussed
- I fax the note to the physician that referred you to me (normally your primary care physician) and anyone else you ask me to send it to
- The note is visible to doctors who work in my office (University Medicine)
 - It is not visible to anyone else unless I fax it to them

What if you get sick between appointments?

- If possible, it is always best to contact your physician's office during normal business hours.
- On weekends and at nights most doctors are covered by a physician who is "on call"
 - For my practice if I'm away during the week one of the doctors who is working in the clinic that day is "on call" and will receive messages and requests on my behalf
 - At night and on the weekend there is a physician "on call" from home. You can call and ask the operator to page that physician.
 - That physician does not always have access to my office notes

What can the covering physician do?

- Refill prescriptions
- Fill out prior authorizations
- Will receive and review all test results and contact you if there is something urgent that cannot wait until your regular physician is available
- Can discuss symptoms with you and recommend either coming in for an urgent appointment or going to the emergency room
 - For the most part a physician who does not know you cannot make treatment decisions over the phone
 - I personally will never prescribe antibiotics or prednisone for a patient I do not know unless his/her doctor has specifically communicated that is what he would like me to do

Urgent appointments

- Not great for patients with chronic pulmonary disease
- Lots of very serious things can make a patient with chronic lung disease more short of breath
- Very few of these things can be diagnosed by a review of your symptoms and a physical exam

Why does my doctor recommend going to the emergency room?

- Often the fastest way to get a bunch of things done quickly
 - Vital signs (particularly your oxygen level)
 - General appearance (how sick do you look?)
 - Chest XRAY (do you have evidence of pneumonia?)
 - EKG and labs (are you having a heart attack)
 - Chest CT (do you have a blood clot)

What's up with those prior authorizations?

- Basically an extra step your insurance company requires before they agree to pay for a medication
- As a physician I get to decide which medication to prescribe. That does not mean that your insurance company has to agree to pay for it.
- The most common reason that pulmonary medications require a prior authorization is that they are “brand name” and some are more expensive than others.
- When your insurance company asks for a prior authorization they are asking your physician to justify why using a less expensive medication is not appropriate.

Costs of Common Pulmonary Medications

Drug	Cost
Spiriva	330.29
Advair	310.19
Breo	293.08
Symbicort	286.66
Dulera	268.17
Serevent	266.71
Foradil	232.30
Indacterol	212.49
Flovent	203.63
Pulmicort	194.50
ProAir	58.82
Ventolin	53.97
Generic Metoprolol	3.60

Standard COPD regimen of advair, spiriva and pro-air costs **\$8391** per year

Intravenous pulmonary hypertension therapy (remodulin) costs **\$97,615** per year

Tips to Make the Most of Your Appointments

Organize Your Thoughts

- Make a list of questions – most important first
- Write down your symptoms (what, when, how long, how often, how relieved)
- Be prepared to share information related to your health

In the Exam Room

- Turn off your cell phone
- Bring a family member or friend, identify spokesperson
- Let doc know if s/he is using terms you do not understand or if talking too fast
- Make sure you understand instructions, plan and follow up
- Ask questions

Questions For Tests and Procedures

- Why do you need it?
- How will it help me?
- How is it performed?
- What are the risks?
- What are the alternatives?
- Who will do it?
- Where is it done?
- What should I expect?
- What is the recovery?

After the Visit

- Research your condition
- Organize your thoughts
- Call back office for questions

Final Thoughts

- Be your own advocate
- The medical system works best when we all work as a team to keep you healthy
- We are working for you, don't be shy about being satisfied

Questions?