

How to get the most out of your consultation with a health care professional

Before undertaking a consultation with your doctor or nurse is important to prepare for the session to ensure that the limited time available is used effectively. It may be helpful to write down your key concerns, point and questions. Below is a wide range of points, some will be more relevant to you as an individual than others. Should you choose, someone may accompany you into the consultation, if you would like this just alert the reception staff or nurse before the consultation on arrival.

- **Topics or issues to communicate of concern to you:**
 - Your primary skin-related health concern - this may include not only your physical health but your mental health too- your feelings and ability to cope with your skin condition (feeling hopeless, helpless and losing self-esteem)
 - How your skin condition impacts on your life- your relationships- especially your family life and your ability to work
 - consider your anxiety / stress levels, your self-esteem, low mood, embarrassment that restricts your social / work life
 - If/where you are having difficulty taking care of yourself - especially your ability to manage your treatment - (a key aspect of managing skin conditions long-term and their impact- is to learn how to look after yourself to some degree and manage your treatments at home and work with the support of health professionals). Areas you may wish to raise may include:-
 - how you manage your symptoms and use your treatments- this may include your confidence as well as your knowledge and skills
 - any specific fears or anxieties you have
 - What you have found helpful / unhelpful to help you cope / manage your condition in the past
 - The barriers you anticipate or have found to seeking help- past or present:
 - Your ability to talk about your condition and its impact on you to your partner,/ family, friends and where appropriate your colleagues
 - Your past experience of managing your skin condition and how you have coped with this
 - The faith you have in your treatment and its effectiveness
 - If you have had any history of mental illness
 - How you feel about your appearance and body image and what the priorities are important of you to address (eg: the location of the rash/ rashes, the symptoms - your comfort, timing issues)

Potential question areas you may wish to ask:

- What additional sources of support are available to you locally -eg: - who can I talk to further? Access to other health professionals, self-help groups- learning from others in person or virtually through the internet, web sites and other information sources
- What you are expecting of your treatment- what changes are you seeking
- What are your treatment options (and then express your preferences amongst those on offer)

- What you anticipate the practical limitations on using new treatments (eg: attending light therapy, applying your topical treatments during the working day).