

Educate Yourself – Questions You Should Ask

If your TMJ problems get worse with time, you should seek professional advice. However, first and foremost, educate yourself. Informed patients are better able to talk with healthcare providers, ask questions, and make knowledgeable decisions.

1. Proceed cautiously and get several independent opinions before beginning any suggested irreversible treatment.
2. When going to the doctor, it is in every patient's best interest to always be accompanied by a person whom you trust and who will act as your advocate.
3. We recommend taking notes during your appointments.
4. You should ask a doctor these questions before consenting to any treatment:
 - What is the purpose of the proposed treatment and why is it necessary in my case?
 - Is the treatment reversible or is it irreversible?
 - Will this treatment reduce my pain?
 - What side effects or complications may I experience and what should be done about them?
 - What other treatments are available?
 - What are the advantages of the proposed treatments over other forms of therapy with respect to benefits and risks?
 - How many follow-up treatments will be necessary?
 - How much will the proposed treatment cost?
 - Will insurance cover the treatment costs?
 - Is there a payment contract I must sign? (If so, ask to take the form home to review.)
 - Is there a consent form I must sign for treatment? (If so, ask to take the form home to review.)
 - Has the proposed treatment been studied in clinical trials* for safety and effectiveness?
 - Is this treatment part of a clinical trial* and if so, what are my obligations and the conditions involved in participating in this trial?

* Clinical trials involve some risk on the part of the patient. Some treatments may have unforeseen side effects. By law, researchers are required to make sure volunteers understand what will happen during and after the trial, as well as the risks and benefits. The following are questions you should ask before agreeing to participate in a clinical trial:

- What makes me a candidate for the study?
- What are the risks?
- What is involved? What will I have to do?
- What checks and balances are in place to protect my safety?
- Will I be charged anything or be compensated for my participation?

- Who is paying for the study?
- How can I end my participation if I change my mind and will you continue to treat me?
- What will happen when the study is over? Will I be told the results?
- Whom do I contact to express concerns or obtain information?
- What do the researchers hope to learn?
- Who will have access to my medical information?

Your healthcare provider should answer these questions in words you can understand. If you don't understand any part of the discussion with your healthcare professional, it is important to ask that it be explained again. If your provider will not or cannot answer these questions, find one who will. You must be your own healthcare advocate.