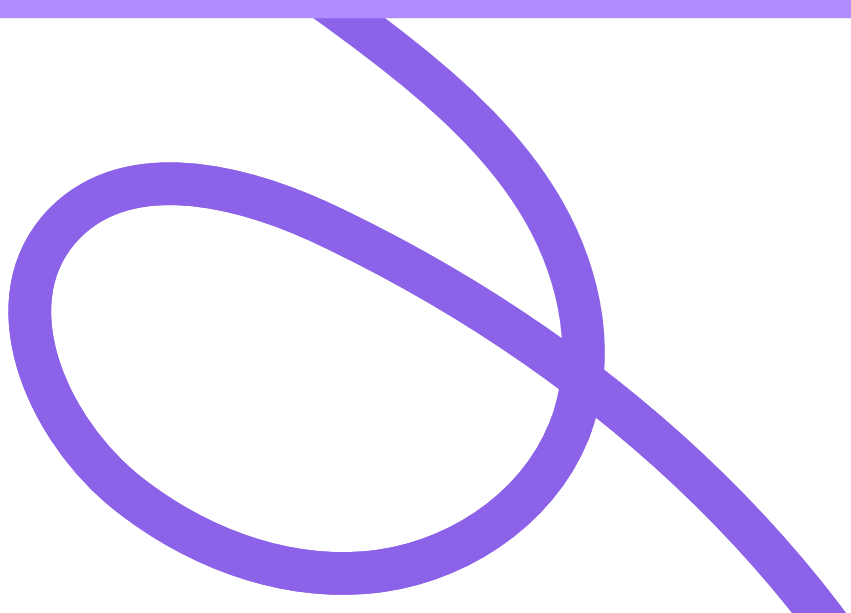


What to Do When Symptoms Are Dismissed

You've seen a doctor, but your symptoms haven't improved—or you still feel something isn't right.



This guide can help you:

- Decide what to do next
 - Ask clearer questions about your symptoms and care plan
 - Know when to get checked again
 - Prepare for a follow-up appointment or second opinion
-

Get Help Right Away

Call 911 if you have:

- Chest pain, pressure, or tightness
- Sudden shortness of breath
- Sudden weakness, numbness, or drooping in the face, arm, or leg, especially on one side
- Sudden trouble speaking or seeing

Call your doctor the same day if one leg suddenly swells, hurts, or feels warm. This could be a sign of a blood clot.

What's Happening Now?

Find the situation that best fits what you're experiencing and see what you can do next.

My symptoms are severe, suddenly worse, or have changed a lot.

Get checked right away.

Don't wait for your next scheduled visit.

If you think it's an emergency, call 911 or go to the emergency department.

If you're unsure how soon you need care, call your doctor's office right away.

I left the visit without a clear explanation or next step.

Call your doctor's office to clarify the plan.

You might ask:

- *"What might be causing my symptoms?"*
 - *"What should I expect to happen next?"*
 - *"When should I follow up if this doesn't improve?"*
 - *"What changes mean I should get care sooner?"*
-

My symptoms aren't improving as expected.

Ask to be seen again.

Be specific about what is still happening and what, if anything, has changed.

You can say:

"My symptoms aren't improving. I'd like to be seen again."

If no one told you how long it should take to get better, ask:

"When can I expect this to get better, and when should I follow up if it doesn't?"

I've followed up, but my concerns haven't been fully addressed.

Consider a second opinion.

You have the right to see another doctor at any time. A new doctor may confirm what you've heard, or offer a different explanation.

Before you make the appointment, check whether your insurance requires a referral or limits which doctors are covered. Bring your medical records, test results, imaging, medication list, and notes about your symptoms.



Questions to Ask

These questions can help you understand what your doctor thinks is happening, what has been ruled out, and what comes next.

It's okay to use this page during your appointment. You can even hand it to your doctor and say, *"I wrote down a few questions I'd like to go over."*

If you left without clear answers:

You might ask:

- *"What might be causing my symptoms?"*
- *"What have you already ruled out, and what's still uncertain?"*
- *"Are there other possible causes we should consider?"*
- *"What should I expect to happen next?"*
- *"How long should it take to feel better?"*
- *"When should I follow up?"*
- *"What changes mean I should get care sooner?"*

If your symptoms aren't improving:

You might say:

- *"My symptoms aren't getting better. I'd like to schedule another visit."*

Then ask:

- *"Do my current symptoms change what you think is happening?"*
- *"What other causes should we consider?"*
- *"Would another test or exam help?"*
- *"What should I do if I don't get better?"*

If you're considering a second opinion:

Before the appointment:

- Ask your current doctor's office how to get copies of your medical records, test results, and imaging.
- Ask your current doctor: *"What diagnoses or possible causes have you considered so far?"*
- Ask the new doctor's office what records or other information you should bring.

At the second-opinion appointment, you can ask:

- *"Do any of my previous tests need to be repeated?"*
- *"Is there anything else you think should be checked?"*

Before you leave:

Write down the answers to your most important questions—or ask someone who came with you to take notes.

Then confirm the plan:

"Just so I understand, the next step is _____. Did I get that right?"

Most of all, make sure you know what to do if your symptoms continue or get worse.

Prepare for Your Next Visit

Writing down a few details beforehand can help you clearly explain what's been happening, especially if you're seeing someone new or returning because things haven't improved.

Bring this page with you. A trusted friend or family member can also come along to listen, take notes, and help you remember what was discussed.

My symptoms started:

Where am I feeling the symptoms?

Since my symptoms started, they have:

☐ Improved ☐ Stayed about the same ☐ Gotten worse ☐ Changed in another way

How have the symptoms changed?

How severe are your symptoms right now?

0 — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — 10

No symptoms

Worst you can imagine

What makes my symptoms better or worse?



How are these symptoms affecting my daily life?

Think about things such as walking, working, sleeping, exercising, eating, or caring for yourself and/or your family.

What concerns me most?

What health problems run in my family or affect me?

What medicines do I take?

Include prescriptions, over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and supplements.

What care have I had so far?

Appointments, tests, treatments, or recommendations you've received so far.

Three things to say at your next visit:

- *"Here's what's changed since I was last seen."*
- *"Here's what I'm most concerned about."*
- *"What's the next step if my symptoms continue?"*

This resource is for general education and is not a substitute for medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment.

If you think you may be experiencing a medical emergency, call 911 or seek emergency medical care.

