

APPOINTMENT DATE

DOCTOR'S NAME



HEART OF PERICARDITIS

DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

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Make the most of your next doctor visit. By taking some simple steps, you can be better prepared to be your best advocate. Answer a few questions about your medical history and symptoms to create a guide that may help you clearly relate to your doctor how recurrent pericarditis affects you on an ongoing basis.

1 BEFORE YOUR VISIT

PREPARE FOR YOUR APPOINTMENT

Given that recurrent pericarditis is a rare disorder, it's possible that your doctor may not be familiar with your symptoms and treatment options. That's why it's important to plan in advance so you can get the most out of your visit. Even if you're seeing a specialist, be sure to come prepared so you can ask the right questions to receive the best possible care.



Set appointment goals. What do you need to discuss with your doctor? This could include your symptoms and recurrences, your medications, how you feel, how your daily activities are affected by pericarditis, or questions about your diet and exercise.



Make a list of key medical information or keep a personal medical record. It can help to keep an updated personal medical record. This record can include a list of any other health events you've had, results of past medical tests, and any prescription or over-the-counter medicines you're taking. This can be especially helpful if you move to a new place or change doctors.

➤ [Record your information on page 4.](#)



Document the symptoms you have been experiencing. Have you had a recurrence since your last appointment? Have you experienced any new, persistent, or worsening symptoms?

➤ [Use the Symptoms Worksheet on page 6 to record your current situation.](#)



Think about your questions. Start with the list included in this guide and think about any additional questions you want to discuss with your doctor.



Take notes and/or record the appointment. Use this Doctor Discussion Guide or a notebook to keep track of your doctor's answers and recommendations. Ask your doctor if you can record the appointment using your phone so you can reference it later. You can also bring a friend or family member with you to help you advocate, take notes, and ask questions.



Speak up. You are your best advocate. If you don't understand a test result or something your doctor says, ask them to explain it in more detail. It's ok to ask for specific tests or to see a specialist, such as a cardiologist, for a consultation.



Ask for a treatment plan. Managing recurrent pericarditis is an ongoing process. Ask your doctor about treatment options and ways to manage your disease. It's important to partner with your doctor to develop a personalized treatment plan that works for you.

2 YOUR HEALTH HISTORY

SHARE THE ISSUES AND EVENTS THAT MAY HAVE IMPACTED YOUR HEALTH IN THE PAST.

✓ Pericarditis diagnosis: Tell your doctor if you were previously diagnosed with pericarditis.

- I have not been diagnosed with pericarditis.
- I have been diagnosed with pericarditis.
I have had _____ recurrences in the past _____ months.

✓ Recent health events: Tell your doctor if you have had any of the following health events prior to experiencing current symptoms.

- An infection (from a bacteria, fungus, or parasite)
- A virus (such as influenza or COVID-19)
- A heart procedure (such as a pacemaker)
- Injury to your heart or pericardium (such as from a car accident, radiation, or chemotherapy)
- Other: _____

✓ Other impactful effects: If your recurrent pericarditis has caused anxiety or depression, you are not alone. Individuals with recurrent pericarditis have reported that the condition can affect their emotions and quality of life.

Tell your doctor if you have recently experienced the following:

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Anxiety | <input type="radio"/> Fear of your next flare | <input type="radio"/> Feelings of depression | <input type="radio"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="radio"/> Sleeplessness | <input type="radio"/> Interruption in your daily routine | <input type="radio"/> Missing time at work | _____ |

✓ Other key medical information:

3 YOUR SYMPTOMS

SHARE YOUR SYMPTOMS

✓ **Chest pain:** Tell your doctor if you are experiencing any of the following types of chest pain. Be specific. Don't just say you're experiencing chest pain—give details such as, "It gets worse when I breathe in or when I lie down."

- Intensified chest pain:** Pain that becomes worse when you cough, lie down, or inhale deeply and becomes better when you sit up or lean forward.
- Sharp chest pain:** A stabbing or piercing pain behind the breastbone or in the left side of your chest. Sharp chest pain becomes worse when breathing in or lying down.
- Traveling chest pain:** Pain that moves from the chest into the left shoulder and neck.
- Dull chest pain:** A dull ache or pressure behind the breastbone or in the left side of your chest. It may feel like a vise that is squeezing the heart. Dull chest pain becomes worse when breathing in or lying down.

✓ **Other symptoms:** Tell your doctor if you're experiencing any of the following signs of pericarditis.

- Back, neck, or shoulder pain**
- Cough**
- Shortness of breath when lying down**
- Heart palpitations**
- Low-grade fever**
- Overall sense of weakness and fatigue**
- Anxiety**
- Swelling in the abdomen, legs, or feet**
- Other:** _____



You have important information to offer about your condition. Sharing it with your doctor will help them provide you with the best care possible. **Use the Symptoms Worksheet on page 6 to document the symptoms you've experienced in the past.**



SYMPTOMS WORKSHEET

Use this chart to make note of the vital details related to your own pericarditis experience. These details will help you and your doctor design your best treatment plan.

SYMPTOM	DATE & TIME	HOW LONG DID IT LAST?	WHAT WERE YOU DOING?	NOTES



4 YOUR TRIGGERS

DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES OR EVENTS CAN CAUSE A PERICARDITIS EPISODE

✓ **Some individuals have reported that the following precautions may help avoid triggering pericarditis flares.** This is not a comprehensive list. You may wish to talk to your doctor about:



Limiting caffeine, alcohol, excess heat, stress, and periods of elevated heart rate



Trying to regulate strenuous exercise. Exercise may trigger a recurrence, and doctors have advised individuals to keep their heart rate under 100 beats per minute with moderate activity. Some individuals with pericarditis have reported using a fitness tracker to keep track of their heart rate.

✓ **Think about your triggers to discuss with your doctor.** If you have a repeat pericarditis flare, consider what you may have been doing or how you were feeling. Did you drink caffeine or feel stress before your symptoms began? Was it a hot day? Were you exercising? By identifying and tracking your triggers, you can work to avoid future pericarditis recurrences. Record your experiences below.

TRIGGER ACTIVITY	HOW LONG AFTER THIS ACTIVITY DID YOU START TO FEEL SYMPTOMS?	NOTES

5 ASK QUESTIONS

BE YOUR OWN BEST ADVOCATE

When seeking care for recurrent pericarditis, it is important to educate yourself about the disease and be part of the conversation. **Below are some important questions to discuss with your doctor.**

✓ **What might be causing my pericarditis (or recurrent pericarditis)?**

✓ **Are there additional diagnostic tests, such as an echocardiogram or MRI, that we should consider?**

✓ **What are the side effects of the recommended treatment?**

✓ **What treatment approach do you recommend?**

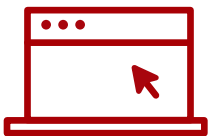
✓ **When should I expect resolution of my symptoms?**

✓ **Am I at risk for long-term complications?**

✓ **What should I do if my symptoms do not resolve or if they reappear?**

✓ **Aside from medication, do you recommend any other lifestyle changes or management approaches?**

✓ **Are there any other specialists you would recommend I see as part of my disease management? (A hematologist? A dietitian? A therapist to help with stress?)**



To learn more about recurrent pericarditis and strengthen your ability to be your own best advocate, visit [WhatIsPericarditis.com](https://www.WhatIsPericarditis.com).