

DOCTOR'S VISITS

Visiting hours at the doctor are often a bit short to talk over everything extensively and some patients feel a bit nervous before an appointment because of this, because they're scared they'll forget to ask things.

What needs to have the priority for sure during these conversations?

For medical appointments there are two main things you need to keep in mind. First of all you are your best counselor. No one can represent you better than you. This means you need to learn as much as possible about the illness ALS, to have a satisfying and good conversation with your doctor. Then you won't only have complete control over your health needs, but you're also capable of asking the right questions. Therefore you should write down all your questions up ahead into a list, so everything will be discussed during the doctor's visit and nothing will be forgotten.

Second of all you need to think ahead. ALS symptoms are progressive and your needs will change constantly. Because your mental strength and your possibilities may differ each month, it's good to think about the material you'll need in the future early on, to live more easily and safely with ALS. Don't forget that some resources aren't available on a short term.

Concerning this we'll give you a few important pointers and questions you can discuss with your doctor.

- At the first signs of trouble with walking you are best to ask resources such as a foot prosthesis a walking stick, a walking frame and in a further stage a wheelchair;
- When the wrist and hand strength have weakened, ask for a wrist brace and special cutlery;
- When you start noticing problems with swallowing you better ask for information about specific food that's easy to swallow and the possibility to use a feeding tube (PEG);
- When you're having speech issues, talk over the options for specific communication tools;
- At the first signs of having difficulty breathing or the feeling of getting too little oxygen ask for a BiPap;
- When any kind of situation demands more care, talk about it with your doctor and ask for the possible solutions.

For communication tools, mobility resources and other tools (excluding medical devices) you can always go to the ALS Liga. For more information you can contact the secretary at 016-23 95 82 or send an e-mail to info@als.be.

Translation: **Sara De Roy**