

Before Your First Appointment:

1. Complete any paperwork the doctor requires. Many practices have lengthy questionnaires for new patients, and you may be asked to fill one out before you can be seen. Take your time and answer the questions thoughtfully. Some of the questions may seem irrelevant, but your answers help the doctor to understand your problem and how it affects your life, and to determine what treatments are most suitable for you.
2. Bring the results from any MRI or CT scans you have had. These results include a written report from the radiologist who originally read the scan as well as a copy of the pictures themselves. These pictures can be actual films or on CD. In many cases, your pain management physician needs to see these pictures before he or she can come up with a treatment plan. You will save yourself time if you bring the films to your first appointment. The saying “a picture is worth a thousand words” is also true in evaluating your condition.
3. Bring your insurance card and picture ID.
4. Make sure that you understand your insurance plan and how much you will be expected to pay at your first visit. For most people, this will mean that you will need to pay a copay. Be prepared to make this payment. If you don't carry cash, make sure the office takes checks or credit cards.
5. If your insurance plan requires a primary-care physician referral, make sure one is in place.
6. Wear comfortable clothing that is easy to remove. During your first visit, a neurologic exam may be performed. For example, if you have back pain that radiates into your legs, testing may be done on your legs and feet. Wear shoes that come off easily to make the experience easier for you.
7. Bring any relevant medical records. If another physician sent you to the pain management office, that physician should have sent all the necessary records. Trust but verify: check to make sure the records arrived in advance; if they have not, do your best to obtain all relevant records and bring them with you to your first appointment.

Before Any Procedure:

1. Make your doctor aware of all medications you're taking. Some heart medications are blood thinners and will increase the risk of bleeding complications.
2. If you are diabetic, you must tell your physician ahead of time. Insulin-dependent diabetics will have to follow specific protocols before and after any injection. If you are having your procedure with sedation, you will need to fast before the procedure, and you should bring your insulin with you to the procedure. Steroids can increase your blood sugar and so you may need to work with your diabetic doctor to adjust your dosages as indicated.
3. Because some procedures require sedation, you must not eat or drink for several hours before the procedure, because when you are sedated you are more likely to inhale food and stomach acid into the lungs, which can result in severe pneumonia.