Printable Doctor Discussion Guide

One way to make the most of your visit is to create a list of questions beforehand and then check them off as you and your doctor talk.

Here are some sample questions to get you started.

After you describe your symptoms, ask:
- Do you think I have depression?
- Could my depression be triggered by some other medical condition or by medications I'm currently taking?
- What are some of the treatment options to help these symptoms improve?

If your doctor diagnoses depression, ask:
- Can you treat my depression or do I need to see a specialist such as a psychiatrist or a therapist? If so, can you recommend someone?
- Do I need counseling? If so, can you recommend someone?
- What is talk therapy, and how will I know if it's working?
- Are there any self-help strategies or lifestyle changes you'd recommend?

If you have been receiving treatment for depression but still do not feel like your old self, ask:
- Will these symptoms improve or is this the best I can expect?
- How long should we wait until we consider switching medications or trying something else?

If your doctor prescribes any medication, ask:
- What are the benefits of taking this medication?
- When will the medication start working? How will I know if it's working?
- What will it feel like to be on this medication?
- What are the side effects? Will they go away over time? What should I do if I experience them?
- How long will I need to take this medication? Will I be able to stop taking it eventually?
- Should I avoid certain things (e.g., other medications, alcohol) or particular foods while I'm taking this drug?
- What if it doesn't work? Is there something else I can do?
- Will this medication take care of my depression symptoms?
- If I take this medication, will my depression ever return?

It's also a good idea to discuss with your doctor his or her overall approach to treatment. Agree on how he or she will be monitoring your progress. Find out if it is best to follow up in person or on the phone and how often you should do so.