

Your Role

You are the key member of your health-care team. Research shows that patients who play an active role in their medical care enjoy better health. That's why we urge you to voice any concerns or questions you have. We will say more about this later.

Scheduling Office Visits

Generally, our offices are open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, except for holidays. Each doctor sets aside some days for office visits and other days for surgeries.

Our scheduling takes into account the type of visit (such as initial, pre-surgery, or follow-up) and patients' medical needs. Patients with acute, life-threatening illnesses take precedence.

Even after you have confirmed your appointment, your neurosurgeon may be called away for an emergency. We regret the inconvenience to you but hope you'll understand our desire to help patients when they need us the most.

If your doctor leaves for an emergency, a nurse practitioner or physician assistant may see you, or your doctor may see you after a delay. Alternatively, we may have to reschedule your appointment. We make every effort to see rescheduled patients as soon as possible.

Access for People with Disabilities

Our offices are accessible to people with limited mobility. If you need other accommodations such as a sign-language interpreter, please let us know when making your appointment. Some lead time may be required to arrange accommodations.

No Smoking

California law bans smoking in medical offices.

Preparing for Office Visits

When you book your first appointment, please ask what you should bring. You can use the following checklist to help your visit go smoothly:

- Contact your insurance carrier to verify coverage of our services and to determine what procedures your carrier requires you to follow.
- If another doctor sent you to us, make sure he or she faxes us a referral.
- Please ask your doctor to also fax us reports on any relevant imaging studies such as MRIs, CAT scans, angiograms, or X rays.
- Pick up your imaging films unless you already have them.
- Sign any necessary release forms so that your primary-care doctor and relevant specialists can send copies of your medical records to us.
- Let us know if you need a special payment plan.
- If you received a health questionnaire by mail, by fax, or from our Web site, please complete it before you come in. Otherwise, please be prepared to fill it out on arrival. The questionnaire will ask about your past and present medical conditions, surgeries, medications, dietary supplements, and pertinent insurance policies.

What You Need to Bring

When you come for office visits, please bring your:

- imaging films, such as those from X rays, MRIs, CAT scans, or angiograms;
- any relevant reports, including pathology reports and imaging study reports, unless your physician has sent them;
- a list of current medications and supplements that you take;
- insurance card or information for all applicable policies;
- co-payment, if applicable; and
- a completed health questionnaire, if received or downloaded.

Without the above, we may have to postpone your visit. Individual offices may have additional requirements; please check the insert for more information.

If Your Doctor Recommends Surgery

Feel free to seek additional opinions about your treatment options. We would be glad to recommend other doctors, including those inside or outside the Foundation.

Except in certain emergencies, we must get your informed consent before performing a procedure such as surgery. In doing so, we must explain the risks and benefits of the procedure, alternative treatments, and the likely outcomes of not having the procedure.

A form may be used to reinforce information given orally and to document that consent was given. If you do not understand any part of the consent form, do not sign it until we have addressed your concerns. If the parts of the form that describe the procedure are blank, please ask your health-care professional to fill in the blanks before you sign.

If You Need Hospital Care

Hospitals

Scripps Memorial Hospitals in La Jolla and Encinitas

Scripps Mercy in Hillcrest

Alvarado Hospital

We are also affiliated with, or practice at:

Senta Clinic-Division of Neurological and Spinal Surgery

Synergy Medical Institute

If you have concerns about the hospital to which you would be admitted, let us know.

Your Hospital Team

When admitted to the Hospital, a neurosurgery team, headed by an attending faculty neurosurgeon, will care for you. Other team members typically include residents, medical students, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, and nurses. Team members will make rounds outside your room each morning.

At the other hospitals in which we practice, your primary neurosurgeon, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners will manage your care.

Team members will address questions about your care and, on request, communicate with your family. Any change in your condition will be conveyed to your primary attending neurosurgeon or to the attending neurosurgeon on call.

Responsibility for your care rests with your primary neurosurgeon, who visits patients after surgery according to his or her individual schedule. Please see the insert for more information.

After Hospitalization

Follow-up care plays a crucial role in your recovery. You will leave the hospital with a set of instructions. Please call your doctor's office within one business day to make or confirm your follow-up visit and to discuss follow-up care, which may include suture removal.

Each follow-up visit will be tailored to your individual needs. Please contact your doctor's office any time after your surgery if questions or concerns arise.

Prescription Renewals

We only renew prescriptions that we initiated. For other medications, please contact the health professional who prescribed them.

We can fill many renewal requests by phone. You or your pharmacy should call us at least three business days before you expect to run out. Sometimes, for medical reasons, we will need to see you before issuing the prescription.

Emergencies

If you need emergency care outside normal office hours, go directly to the nearest hospital emergency department.

Questions or Concerns Between Office Visits

Patients often forget to ask questions during office visits or think of new ones later. If that happens to you, call us. Unless your concerns are urgent, please phone during office hours.

A menu of options will direct you to the appropriate party. If a secretary or receptionist takes

your call, be aware that he or she cannot answer clinical questions, but will forward your message to the appropriate practitioner.

A physician, nurse, nurse practitioner, physician assistant, or resident will return calls about medical matters, typically within one business day. Some questions, though, require a review of tests and records as well as discussions among team members. In those cases, we may ask you to call back or await a call from us the next business day. Sometimes we will ask you to schedule an office visit.

Patients who received treatment at Rhode Island Hospital and have concerns outside office hours may call 401-444-4000, and ask the operator to page the neurosurgery resident on call. Explain that you have had surgery, and give the name of your primary or attending neurosurgeon. As a member of the neurosurgery team, the resident on call is available around-the-clock through the Rhode Island Hospital Emergency Department and can contact the Foundation's attending neurosurgeons 24 hours a day.

If you had surgery at another hospital, please talk with your attending neurosurgeon about where to direct questions outside normal business hours.

How You Can Help Yourself

As health-care professionals, we have elaborate tools and techniques at our disposal, but none can replace the involvement of patients in their own care. Only when patients and professionals work together do we achieve our best results. For your part, we ask you to:

Make sure your health-care professionals know your medical history, including:
What medical conditions have you had?

Which drugs do you take? At what dose?

Do you take any dietary supplements? If so, which ones?

Do you have allergies? If so, to what?

Have you ever suffered a bad reaction to a particular drug?

Talk openly with the professionals involved in your care. Sometimes patients hesitate to mention embarrassing symptoms and concerns, but doing so may help us relieve your medical problems.

Ask us to explain any aspect of your treatment that you do not understand.

If possible, follow the advice of your health-care professional. If you cannot do so, let us know; we may be able to explore other options.

Make sure you know what medicines, if any, you should be taking. Ask:
What is this medication for?

How often should I take it?

Is it safe to take with other drugs or dietary supplements that I'm taking?

Should I avoid any particular food, drink, or activities while taking it?

Before you leave the hospital, ask your health-care professional about your follow-up care. You'll need to know when you can resume activity, what medicines you should take, what symptoms should prompt a call to the doctor, and when to return to your doctor's office.