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## **Getting What You Came For:**

### **How to Get the Most Out of Your Visit to the Dermatologist**

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**By Elizabeth H. Quaye**

SECOND YEAR AT THE JACOBS SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES

Reviewed by Kumar Sukhdeo, MD, PhD

Have you had the experience of waiting months to schedule an appointment with your dermatologist and feeling like you never have enough time to speak with them? Well, there are a variety of factors that contribute to this patient experience. Many of them have to do with the structure of the dermatology visit in general and the way healthcare is delivered. But the focus of this article is to equip you with the tools you need to get the most out of your visit to the dermatologist.

Whether your concern has to do with scalp pain, itching or worrisome hair loss, your dermatologist will need to obtain a full history of your current and past symptoms. Many patients lament that they wish they would've mentioned an additional factor of their symptoms after their appointment. Thankfully, there are a few simple ways to avoid this.

First, arrive early to your appointment. This will ensure that your dermatologist will be able to meet with you for the time allotted. Second, explain your symptoms and clinical history clearly. This may be done best by writing down notes on what you have been experiencing. Some questions you want to answer include:

1. What symptoms are you experiencing and when did they begin?
2. Where is the lesion, for example, located and has it spread elsewhere?
3. Is the lesion painful or tender, itchy, red, etc.? Has the lesion evolved?
4. Has anything made your symptoms better or worse? Have you used any treatment?

Answering these questions for yourself before arriving to your appointment will be helpful in allowing the doctor to understand the full scope of the issue. This will also allow you to think of any questions you would like to ask your dermatologist. They will be more than willing to explain any concerns you have about the diagnosis, possibly biopsies, or treatment plan.

Finally, a major suggestion for a successful visit at the dermatologist, especially if it is your first visit, is to make sure that your area of skin concern is fully visible. This may mean that you must take out braided hairstyles and updos or that your wig is easily removable.

There are many ways to take charge of your dermatologic healthcare as you prepare for your next visit. Here is a list of major takeaways on ways for you as a patient to get the most out of your visit, no matter how short it is:

- Arrive early to your appointment
- Explain your symptoms and clinical history clearly
- Have clear questions for your dermatologist
- Ask clarifying questions about their explanations
- Be sure to understand why they prescribed a medication if they did



**CICATRICIAL ALOPECIA RESEARCH FOUNDATION (CARF)**

1586 Sumneytown Pike #1322 • Kulpville, PA 19443

267.613.9811 • [info@carfintl.org](mailto:info@carfintl.org) • [www.carfintl.org](http://www.carfintl.org)