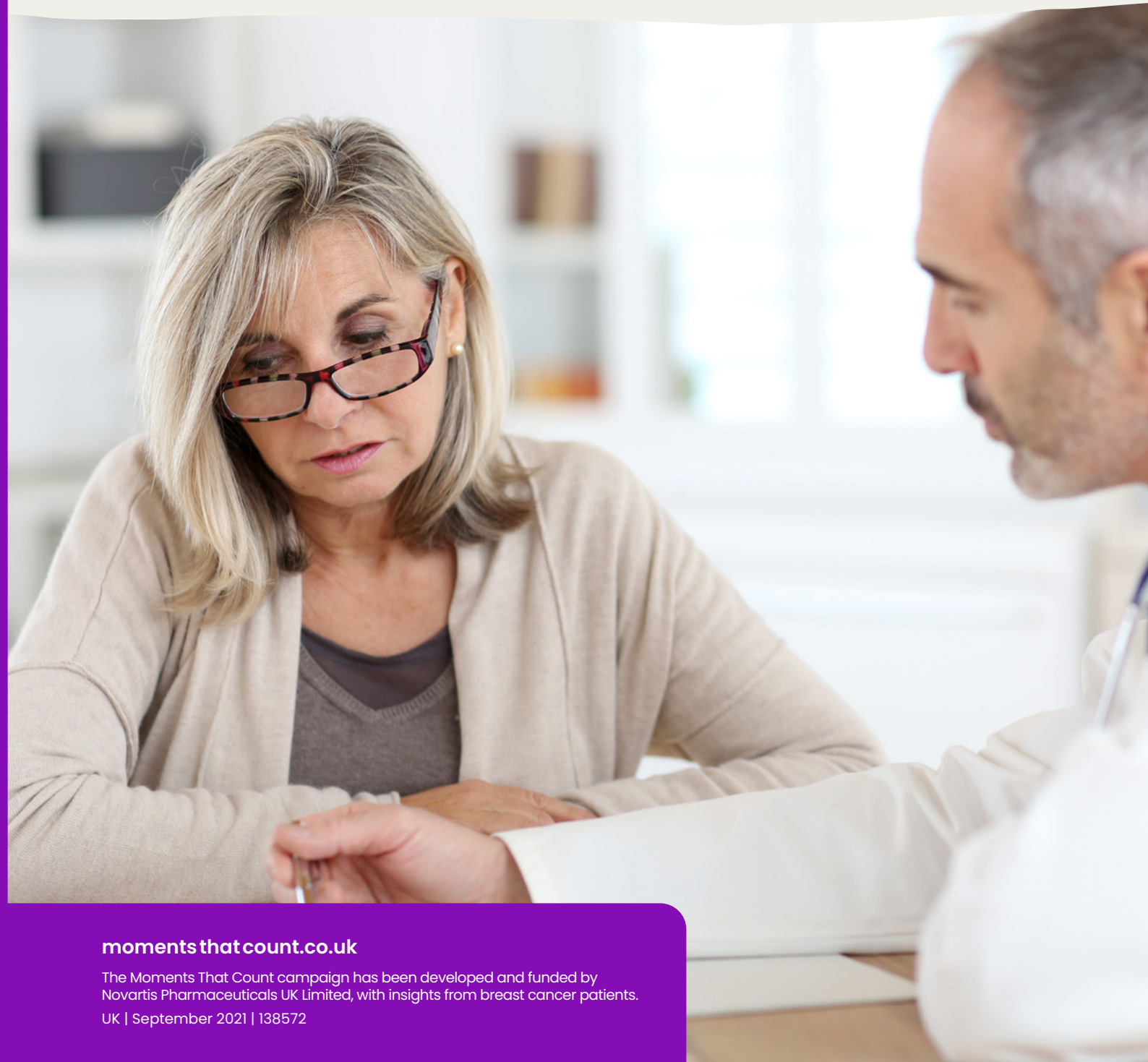


Getting the Most Out of Your Appointments



moments-thatchcount.co.uk

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You know you best

Nobody knows you better than yourself; not even your healthcare team. This means you will need to express how you are feeling to them clearly. Only you have an idea of how particular symptoms are affecting you, the impact they have on your day to day life and how you feel when they are at their best and worst. This is personal knowledge that you will need to express to your healthcare team when you have appointments.

We have put together some tips on how you can get the most from your appointments.



Step 1

Write a list

This can be useful in helping you remember what you would like to discuss with your healthcare team and it may also help you optimise the time allocated for your appointment.

You can write a list of questions, symptoms that have been affecting you particularly badly or even more general questions to better help you understand the condition.

You may find asking open ended questions helpful as you may receive more detailed answers that are not simply a 'yes' or a 'no'.

Example questions to ask your doctor:

- Can you explain my blood test results to me?
- Can you talk me through my scan and explain the results to me?
- Can you tell me more about my tumours? Where are they located?
- What is the aim of my treatment?
- What side effects can I expect from my treatment?
- What can I do to help manage these side effects?
- Can these side effects be prevented or reduced? If so how?
- What other treatment options are available?

Remember you can always ask your specialist to go over anything you feel uncomfortable with or do not understand. The aim is to ensure you know as much about your care as you would like.



Step 2

Bring a family member or friend along

This is entirely up to you! However, it can be helpful having two sets of ears listening, especially if one or both of you are taking notes. This way, it is less likely any information received will be lost or forgotten about.

If you have spoken to them about any concerns beforehand, they can prompt you to make sure you do not forget to mention it to your healthcare team.



Step 3

Be as specific as possible

Think about which symptoms have been affecting you the most and try to keep track over a week or so. It is a good idea to keep note of which symptoms you are experiencing on a regular basis to give your healthcare team a clear indication of their progression.

Examples of symptoms for you to record

Feel free to record any symptoms that you feel are important for example:

Pain

It is useful for your doctor if you record your pain on a scale of 1 (no pain) to 10 (worst pain you've ever had.). You can record where you are feeling the pain, what type of pain it is (dull ache, stabbing pain, intense, nagging etc.)

Fatigue

You can also rate how tired you are feeling from 1-10. 10 would be when you are experiencing extreme fatigue, for example when you are constantly tired, sleeping or resting throughout most of the day.

Recording your symptoms and when you are experiencing them may show you a pattern and reveal a possible trigger for these symptoms.

Examples of other symptoms and side effects

It is a good idea to list every symptom you experience in preparation for an appointment. These symptoms can include:

- Breathlessness
- Change in bowel habits
- Nausea or vomiting
- Poor appetite
- Problems sleeping
- Menopausal problems (hot flushes)
- Unintended weight loss or gain

Date/time	Description of symptom or side effect and any medication taken to help with this	Circle the appropriate rating (if applicable)
		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
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		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10



Step 4

Rehearse your appointments

It can be a good idea to practise what you would like to say at your appointment beforehand. If you can, request help from a friend or family member. This can help you ensure you cover and practice everything you want to discuss.



Step 5

Be as open and honest as possible

We know it is difficult to be completely forthcoming with somebody you are not close with, but it is very important to be completely honest about your symptoms and how they are affecting you. You do not need to feel embarrassed when discussing anything with your healthcare team. If you do not understand or you disagree with something they have said, do not be afraid to say so.

The more honest you are, the quicker your treatment and care can be tailored to your needs.



Step 6

If you are unsure, do not hesitate to ask

Healthcare professionals often use technical language that some people may not understand. If this is the case during your appointments, just let them know if you did not understand something they have said. This is a much better option than you leaving the appointment confused.

You may find it helpful to ask your healthcare team to write down some important points covered during your appointment. This allows you to process or research these points in your own time.



Step 7

Summarise what has been discussed

During the appointment, you may find it helpful to summarise to your healthcare professional your understanding of what has been discussed. This gives them an idea of your understanding and it is an opportunity for them to fill in any missing gaps.



Step 8

Pause and reflect

After your appointment it is always good to have a little think about what has been discussed and what your possible next steps are. How do you feel? What has been decided with your healthcare team? What can you do to prepare for any next appointments?

We recommend going back to Step 1 and creating another list of the subjects you would like to discuss. Write all your thoughts and feelings down for your next appointment and your healthcare team will be happy to discuss anything at all.