

# Questions To Ask Your Doctor

These sample questions are meant to be a guideline of the types of questions you may want to ask your doctor. Sometimes it is helpful to have a list so you don't forget. It might help to bring someone with you to your appointment, if you are especially anxious. You may want to take a tape recorder with you, but ask your doctor's permission to use it. These questions were written from a patient's perspective and are not intended as medical advice.

1. What strain(s) of mycobacteria do I have? Where in my lungs are the mycobacteria located?
2. Was drug sensitivity performed? (If not, can it be done while the sample is still viable?)
3. What drugs will I be taking? (Doctors who are expert in the treatment of mycobacterial infections state 2, 3 or more drugs are necessary to prevent these bacteria from becoming resistant to one antibiotic. Certain combinations of antibiotics work better together because they attack the bacteria in more than one way.)
4. What is the dosing level for each medication?
5. How long do you expect me to be on the medications?
6. What monitoring will I need? (See examples below)

7. How often will I have:
  - a. Follow up appointments with you?
  
  - b. X-rays/ CT scans
  
  - c. Lab work
  
  - d. Hearing testing (try to have hearing and vision tests done before starting your medications so they will have a baseline by which to judge any changes)
  
  - e. Vision testing
  
  - f. Sputum cultures
  
8. What side effects will I be likely to have?
  - a. Which should be reported immediately?
  
  - b. When/how do I take my medication?
  
  - c. Do you have any suggestions for coping with the less serious side effects? (see Treatment Tips from Other Patients for some helpful hints)
  
  - d. How often will my drug levels be tested to see if the dosage needs to be altered?

- e. How can I be sure my local lab is familiar with the testing I need to ensure my results are accurate? Should this be a concern?
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- 9. Will IV (Intravenous) drugs be necessary?
  
  - 10. Will I also need inhalers?
  
  - 11. Should I use an Acapella® or Flutter Valve® device? (How often?)
  
  - 12. Can I still take over the counter medicines/vitamins/supplements? (Be sure to tell your doctor about **ALL** nutritional supplements, herbs, or over the counter products that you take. These can interact with your medicines, or decrease their effectiveness.)
  
  - 13. Would I be a candidate for surgery? Why/why not?
  
  - 14. What if I lose my appetite?
  
  - 15. What if I feel depressed?
  
  - 16. Can I exercise? What kind of exercise?
  
  - 17. What precautions should I take? Activities to avoid?

**Some examples of the type of monitoring that may be needed – consult your physician:**

You will probably need at least bi-monthly lab work (CBC, CMP)

Some side effects are especially common with certain antibiotics and need their own specific tests. This is only a partial list:

**Ethambutol** – color vision and visual acuity - monthly

**Clarithromycin** – hearing and balance every 2-4 weeks

**Azithromycin** – hearing and balance every 2-4 weeks

**Amikacin** – hearing, balance every 2-4 weeks / drug levels and kidney function every 1-2 weeks

Other things to consider:

- Keep copies of all your lab work
- Keep your x-ray/CT scan films yourself, or consider having them done where they can be put on a CD