



CENTER FOR SPECIALIZED WOMEN'S HEALTH

Shared Medical Appointments

Shared medical appointments represent a new trend in healthcare that combines the traditional one-on-one physician visit with a chance to participate in a shared appointment led by your physician and a behavioral health specialist (such as a social worker, nurse or health psychologist). These appointments do not take the place of your initial, personal Women's Health evaluation, but can enhance your medical care.

Recent research has shown that patients are overwhelmingly satisfied with these appointments. The opportunity to share and discuss medical concerns with women who have similar health problems and concerns often provides patients with new insight and valuable information about their own health. Patients also enjoy the additional time they spend with their physician and appreciate the support of other healthcare professionals.

WHAT ARE SHARED MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS?

Shared medical appointments (SMA) are offered as follow-up care after your private, individual appointment with our women's health experts. They are offered as additional regularly scheduled follow-up visits.

During the shared medical appointment, you meet with other patients who have similar health concerns. Your physician will provide medical recommendations, answer your questions and can order labs, tests and medications. Women have the opportunity to talk with each other about their concerns, sharing whatever information they feel comfortable sharing. Treatment options and medications are addressed, and prescriptions are changed or refilled, just as in your individual appointment.

continued

WHAT ARE SHARED MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS? (CONT'D)

Physical SMA: (Mondays 1 – 2:30 p.m.)

The physical SMA begins with a private breast and pelvic examinations performed by your women's health physician. Tests and procedures will be ordered, and test results will be discussed during this private exam.

The shared visit will follow your examination in our Women's Health Conference Room.

Follow-up SMA: (Fridays 12:30 – 2 p.m.)

This shared medical appointment allows women to be seen by their physician for follow-up, preventive and/or therapeutic care, in the presence of other women with similar concerns. This format offers several advantages, including improved access, more time spent with your physician, more information shared, and a more relaxed pace of care.

Your physician leads the shared appointment, which may include 10 to 15 patients. Your doctor, a behavioral health specialist, a nurse and other patients are present throughout.

Shared medical appointments are held at the same time and on the same day each week for 90 minutes. These appointments cost the same as an office visit and are covered by insurance.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SHARED MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS?

We have been offering shared medical appointments since 2002. Patients who have taken advantage of this opportunity say they enjoy:

- Longer visits with their doctor
- Prompt access (since SMAs are scheduled regularly, making appointments is easy.)
- Informative healthcare delivery in a warm, supportive setting, and access to a wider variety of medical information.
- Greater attention to the mind/body aspects of women's health.

IS A SHARED MEDICAL APPOINTMENT THE RIGHT CHOICE FOR ME?

Ask your physician if these sessions are appropriate for you. Your physician will be able to guide you. Patients who benefit most from shared medical appointments include:

- Women who need routine follow-up care, women with chronic conditions and women seeking more information about their health problems
- Women who require mind-body care, more time with their physician, periodic surveillance and monitoring or closer follow up
- Women who come for frequent return visits

Shared medical visits aren't always appropriate. They are not intended to completely replace individual office visits and aren't recommended for:

- Initial evaluations
- One-time consultations
- Treatment for urgent medical concerns, such as acute infectious illnesses, vaginal discharge, a new breast lump or abnormal menstrual bleeding
- Complex medical care

Shared medical visits are optional. You'll never be required to participate and always have the option of a traditional individual follow-up visit. If you are not sure whether you would feel comfortable in the shared medical appointment setting, we recommend attending one or two to gain firsthand experience.

HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE?

- During a routine office visit, your physician may invite you to have your next appointment in a shared session.
- A scheduler may call to invite you if a shared session will address your health concern.
- You may register for a shared session by calling at least one business day in advance.

Trust Cleveland Clinic's Center for Specialized Women's Health team to provide a comprehensive approach to your healthcare needs in a warm and supportive environment. We welcome your questions and concerns. **To schedule an appointment or to speak to our specially trained Women's Health Nurse Advocate, call 216.444.4HER.**

To learn more about what we can offer you, visit clevelandclinic.org/womenshealth