

# Handbook: What to Expect from Your Treatment

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Dear Patient:

Thank you for allowing us to serve you on your journey towards wellness.

This handbook explains how we do things, and provides tips and guidance. We hope that you find it useful.

## FREQUENCY AND NATURE OF VISITS

- Your first visit with us, called the psychiatric evaluation, will be 90 minutes. Time-permitting, you will receive lots of education. ***Feel free to take notes!***
- Your follow-up appointment with us, called a medication review, will be 1 – 6 weeks after your initial visit, lasting 20 - 30 minutes.
- After each appointment you will receive a **printed treatment plan**. Please follow the instructions on your treatment plan closely. (NOTE: Whenever there is a contradiction between the instructions on your treatment plan, and the instructions printed on your medication bottle, *the treatment plan takes precedence.*)
- As you begin to feel better, the interim between your appointments will be gradually increased, and may become as infrequent as every 4 – 6 months.
- Once you feel “very well” for one to two years, you may choose to transfer your psychiatric care to your primary care provider (PCP), and return to us on an as-needed basis.
- With few exceptions, ***if we do not hear from you for more than 6 months, we will assume you have moved on to a new provider***, and your case will be closed. Should you decide to return to us after your case is closed, *you will need to schedule another 90-minute appointment* to provide sufficient time for your provider to catch up on your life.

## MEDICATION TIPS

### When to start a new medication

- Start your new medication **on a day off from work or school**.
- If your medication is to be taken at bedtime, **start on a night when you have no work or school the following morning**. In this way, if you experience any unusual side effects, the medication trial will not interfere with your life responsibilities.

### Side effects

- If you experience any unpleasant side effects (other than mild) we prefer that you err on the side of caution and **stop the new medication immediately**. Any medication which you have taken for less than one month is **safe to stop abruptly**.
- **Do *not* try to “tough out” unpleasant side effects**. We prefer that you listen to your body. If in doubt, **STOP** your medication.

## Allergic reactions

- Signs of an allergic reaction can include a rash, hives, or itchiness. If you develop any of these symptoms, **please stop the medication and take Benadryl (diphenhydramine) 50mg** by mouth twice per day, and/or take whatever allergy medication you have available to you (e.g. Claritin, Allegra, or Zyrtec) and follow the instructions on the bottle.
- If despite taking an antihistamine, your symptoms persist, and/or **if you develop a fever or swelling of the face or throat, please call 911 or proceed to your nearest Emergency Department.**

## QUESTIONS FOR YOUR PROVIDER?

### Between appointments

- Please **leave your question for your provider with the receptionist**. The receptionist will communicate with your provider when the provider is free, and call you back with the answer, usually within 24 hours.
- If you need to speak with your provider directly, **tell the receptionist that you want to make an “emergency phone appointment”** (whether same-day or next-day). Note that your insurance will not cover this communication time, and you will be billed as follows: \$3/minute for physician assistant, or \$5/minute for Dr. Massoumi. Occasionally, the provider may decide to make the first 5 minutes free, but this is at the provider’s discretion and we ask that you not expect this. (*See below for our rationale.*)

### Medication changes between appointments

- If you decide you want to change your medication dose, switch to a different medication, or begin a new medication, **you need to schedule an appointment.**
- If you already have an appointment scheduled but it is too far off, **tell the receptionist that you want to make a sooner “emergency (or crisis) appointment”**. (*See below for our rationale.*)

### *Rationale for making appointments*

*The reason you need to make an appointment to get your questions answered, or to change your medication regimen, is because what may seem to you like a “simple question” is to us complicated. To answer your question with the thoroughness that you deserve, your provider must review the following aspects of your chart: your psychiatric and medical diagnoses, your current list of medications and supplements (to avoid drug-drug interactions), your past psychiatric medications tried & failed (to avoid repeating past negative effects), your bloodwork (to ensure your kidney and liver are capable of metabolizing the medication correctly), and your personal preferences (e.g. “needs generics”, “wants to avoid weight gain”, or “sexual side effects are unacceptable”, etc...)*

## **(WORK, SCHOOL, LEGAL) PAPERWORK FROM YOUR PROVIDER**

- If you need your provider to complete a form or write a letter, you need to **schedule an appointment**. During your appointment, your provider will collaborate with you to ensure that you are comfortable with what is being written about you.

## **DIFFICULTY GETTING TO OUR OFFICE**

### **Video teleconferencing with Facetime or Skype**

- Though we generally prefer to see you in person, we may in certain instances agree to see you via Facetime or Skype. This is a useful option for patients who are away on vacation, out of state for college, or live more than one hour away. Note, however, that neither Skype nor Facetime is encoded to HIPAA-compliant standards. Additionally, **patients using BCBS must be at least one hour's drive from our office for BCBS to cover your appointment.**

### **Saturday availability**

- Dr. Massoumi will occasionally have Saturday appointments available. **On Saturdays, only the South entrance by Buffalo Wild Wings is open.** Note that if you are running late or need to cancel last-minute, there will likely be no receptionist working to inform Dr. Massoumi.

## **AFTER-HOURS EMERGENCIES**

- **This clinic does *not* have an after-hours answering service.** If you think that you might try to kill yourself, or kill somebody else, this is a PSYCHIATRIC EMERGENCY. Please call 911 or proceed to your nearest Emergency Department.

## **MEDICATION REFILLS**

- You will be provided with enough medication refills to last until your next appointment. Therefore, you should not need to call us for a refill. If you do require a refill before your next appointment, we may or may not refill it (determined on a case-by-case basis). We are less likely to honor refill requests if you cancelled or (worse) no-showed for your last appointment with us.
- **We require 72 hours' notice for all medication refills. Please plan ahead.**

## **LABWORK/BLOODWORK RESULTS**

- We will review your lab results with you at your next scheduled appointment. The exception to this is if you are on Depakote or Lithium, in which case we will call you about any necessary dosage changes.

## PSYCHIATRIC CARE – DIFFERENT LEVELS

- In an outpatient practice such as ours, appointments are generally no closer than once per week. In the event that you require psychiatric visits more frequently than once per week, we will refer you to a higher level of care. You may return to us once your condition is more stable.

## DISSATISFACTION

- If at any time you become dissatisfied with any service you have received at our clinic, we implore you to bring your concern(s) (whether verbally or via e-mail) to the attention of someone/anyone at our center, including the receptionist(s), office manager, your provider, Dr. Massoumi, or anonymously via the Suggestion Box (wooden box on the waiting room coffee table). **Note that your feedback will be taken very seriously, as it is our clinic's policy to actively engage in greater self-awareness and growth/improvement.**

## TERMINATION OF OUR RELATIONSHIP

- Though our goal is to help you on your path towards becoming your best self, in certain instances we may decide to terminate our professional relationship. We may decide to terminate if we feel that you have abused our staff or providers, or if you consistently fail to comply with the treatment plan (and we are concerned that you are doing yourself more harm than good).