

Print this Form

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR PARENT RECEIVES A DIAGNOSIS OF A SERIOUS ILLNESS

Without an accurate diagnosis your parent may be treated for the wrong problem or go entirely without treatment. Stay calm and use these guidelines to verify the diagnosis.

1. Ask the physician to write down the exact name of your parent's diagnosis.
2. Ask the physician what tests he or she performed to confirm the diagnosis. Get the names of any specialists involved in treatment or diagnosis.
3. Pay particular attention to illnesses appearing in more than one generation or one member of your family.
4. Ask your parent's pharmacist for a print-out of your parent's drug history for the last six months to a year. Make several copies of the print-out. Your parent will have to request this unless you have a completed HIPPA form giving you access to the information.
5. Show the pharmacy print-out to the physician and ask if the diagnosis was made with complete knowledge of your drug history.
6. Ask the physician for a copy of your parent's medical file, including test films (X-ray, MRI). You may have to wait a few days before the file is ready. Some doctors charge a small fee for reproducing these records.
7. Ask trusted friends, colleagues, advisors and illness-specific resources in your or your parent's community (such as the American Heart Assn., The Parkinson's Assn., or the Alzheimer's Assn.) for referrals to a Board Certified specialist in the diagnosed illness.
8. Make an appointment for a second opinion. It's critical to choose a physician who is Board Certified in the specific illness or Board Certified in geriatrics.
9. Make sure the physician giving the second opinion has a copy of all your parent's medical records, including your family history and the pharmacy report you obtained. Take all your parent's medications to the appointment in their original containers.
- 10. Read and print Questions to Ask Your Parent's Doctor and What to Do with the Answers**