



# WESTERN NEUROPATHY ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 4740, Auburn, CA 95604 • (888) 556-3356 • [info@pnhelp.org](mailto:info@pnhelp.org) • [www.pnhelp.org](http://www.pnhelp.org)

## HOW TO PARTNER WITH YOUR DOCTOR

By Barbara Montgomery, Certified Health Coach, Neuropathy Support Group Leader, Contributing Writer  
(Adapted from “5 Way to Make Your Doctor Your Partner”, Leana Wen, M.D., February 22, 2013  
<https://www.nextavenue.org/5-ways-make-your-doctor-your-partner/>)

Peripheral Neuropathy can be a mild annoyance or life threatening so it is especially important to learn all you can about your particular neuropathy. Then begin to work on a plan with your doctor.

It is difficult enough to find a good neuromuscular/neurologist, but once you do, how can you make sure you are getting the best treatment? One way is by becoming a partner with your doctor. Here are a few suggestions:

- **Find a physician who supports shared decision-making.** Physicians who believe in a partnership will actively solicit and welcome your suggestions.
- **State your intentions.** Doctors are not mind readers; many are used to patients who are passive participants in their health care. Whether you are seeing a new doctor or someone with whom you have had a long relationship, make it clear that you want to be involved as a partner in the diagnostic and treatment process.
- **Help your doctor help you.** Most diagnoses can be made from the history of your illness, alone. They are not mind readers. This history information is very important.
- **Understand each test.** Every test your doctor orders should be done for a specific reason — and you should know what it is. Doing “basic labs” or a “screening CT” can be like fingerprinting for your diagnosis. Stay connected and find out the results at your next visit. It is important to follow-up.
- **Make decisions together.** Perhaps you face two or three possible diagnoses. What is going to be done to try to narrow it down? What is the natural course of each possible illness? What can you do to start feeling better?
- **Start and keep a Health Notebook!** This will have all your notes/questions/answers for each doctor and doctor visit.
  - Make a list of questions you want to ask your doctor. Check them off as you ask them. Write the answers by each question. This will ensure that your appointment was meaningful.
  - Upon reflection, if you did not get the answers you need, ask your questions again at your next appointment.