

The First Neurology Appointment

Companion Checklist: How to Prepare & What to Expect

Before the Appointment

Get on the schedule early

- Ask for a neurology referral as soon as concerns arise
- Request to be placed on a cancellation list
- Ask if a nurse practitioner or PA in the neurology practice can see you sooner

Observe patterns (not just memory lapses)

- Repeating questions or stories
- Trouble managing finances or medications
- Getting lost or confused in familiar places
- Changes in judgment or decision-making
- Personality or behavior changes
- Increased defensiveness or lack of insight

Write down specific examples

- What changed?
 - When did it start?
 - How often does it happen?
 - How does it affect daily life or safety?
-

What to Bring

- List of all medications, supplements, and recent changes
- Relevant medical history
- Previous imaging or test results (if available)
- Glasses, hearing aids, mobility aids

- A trusted person who knows the day-to-day picture
-

How to Talk About Concerns

Focus on function, not labels

- Describe daily challenges rather than saying “dementia”
- Use examples: cooking, driving, finances, hygiene, safety

Helpful phrasing

- “We’re noticing changes in how daily tasks are managed.”
 - “These changes are affecting independence and safety.”
 - “We’re seeing patterns that are new and concerning.”
-

What to Expect at the Visit

- Review of medical and family history
- Cognitive screening or brief testing
- Physical and neurological exam
- Discussion of next steps (labs, imaging, further testing)

Important to know

- You may not get a diagnosis at the first visit
 - Testing often happens over time
 - Results may come in stages
-

Possible Tests They May Order

- Blood work (vitamin levels, thyroid, infections, medication effects)
 - Brain imaging (MRI or CT)
 - Neuropsychological testing (more in-depth cognitive testing)
-

Questions to Ask the Neurologist

- What could be causing these changes?
 - What conditions are you ruling out?
 - Are any causes potentially treatable or reversible?
 - What changes should we watch for next?
 - What supports or interventions would help now?
 - How will you communicate with our primary care physician?
-

After the Appointment

- Clarify next steps before leaving
 - Ask who will call with results and when
 - Share findings with your primary care physician
 - Keep observing and documenting changes
 - Schedule follow-up if recommended
-

Important Reminders

- An evaluation is about understanding—not labeling
 - Normal test results don't always mean “nothing is wrong”
 - Early guidance helps with planning, safety, and support
 - You do not need certainty to take action
-