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ONCE YOU RECEIVE YOUR DIAGNOSIS

01 PUT YOURSELF IN YOUR DOCTOR'S SHOES

First, put yourself in your doctor's shoes. Understand how difficult it can be for doctors to arrive at an accurate diagnosis:

- Women and minorities are 20-30 percent more likely than men to be misdiagnosed.
- There are 20,000 to 30,000 diseases out there and those are just the ones we know about.
- Many diseases have similar symptoms; others have no objective tests to define them.
- Women suffer from autoimmune diseases and it can take an average of 5 years to receive an accurate diagnosis.
- Like all of us, doctors see what they expect to see. The same symptom can feel like stomach issues to a gastroenterologist, stress to a psychologist, etc.

02 WHEN YOU RECEIVE YOUR DIAGNOSIS

Ask these questions:

- What evidence supports this particular diagnosis & treatment recommendation?
- What other disease(s) could this possibly be?
- What is the clinical name of this diagnosis so that I can do some research on it?
- What is the proper name of the drug(s) you're suggesting so that I can research these, too?
- What are the benefits & risks of this particular treatment?
- What other treatment choices or alternatives do I have?
- What happens if I do nothing?

03 GET SECOND OPINIONS

I've described how difficult it can be for women to get an accurate diagnosis. I've suggested some questions that might be helpful to ask. Now I want to discuss the importance of second opinions.

- Approximately 12,000,000 Americans are misdiagnosed each year.
- Misdiagnoses are one of the leading causes of death.
- Women hesitate to get second opinions more than men do. We don't want to be rude, hurt the doctor's feelings, or worse be labelled a difficult patient.
- Discuss second opinions with your doctors. Ask them, a trusted family member or friend for a recommendation.