**Here are answers to some Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):**

**What is Diagnostic Certainty?**

Illnesses present with “symptoms” that the patient feels, and “signs,” which the health care provider looks for during a clinical exam. For example, the patient may feel nausea, and the doctor may palpate a tender abdomen. From there, we work together to get to diagnostic certainty. An ultrasound or CT scan of the abdomen will establish a certain diagnosis of appendicitis or not. We should not send the patient for surgery until that diagnosis is certain. Similarly, it is helpful to have diagnostic lab and x-ray tests for congestive heart failure vs. pneumonia before treating with heart meds or antibiotics. Though these examples are obvious and logical, it is just as important to seek diagnostic certainty when it comes to common clinical diagnoses, for example, sinusitis. Many patients feel that when they have sinus congestion, they have an infection and need an antibiotic. Often, the congestion is due to viruses or allergies and do not respond to antibiotics. Specific clinical signs, blood tests, or x-rays can confirm or rule out a bacterial source of sinus infection, and make sure that an antibiotic prescription is likely to be effective.

**How to prepare for fasting labs:**

Modern laboratory methods allow “fasting labs” to be done on a patient who has not had food for four hours. Thus, missing one meal is often sufficient – missing breakfast for morning appointments, and missing lunch for afternoon appointments. We will not do fasting labs for each appointment. For example, it is normal to do fasting labs for diabetic patients every 3-6 months, but many other conditions can be checked every 6-12 months, or do not require fasting. Again, it may be useful to ask our front desk or medical assistants, at the time you make you appointment, whether fasting will likely be required. If you are fasting at the time of your appointment, be sure to also tell this to the medical provider at the beginning of your visit so we can take advantage of your efforts to draw the labs that make most sense for you.

**Can I see the doctor at the Tacoma office?**

It depends on what you would like to be seen for. Our front desk and medical assistants can help you decide which place of service will best meet your needs. We have clinic in Tacoma once a week, currently on Wednesdays.

The Tacoma clinic is primarily for work related injuries and car accident victims. Thus, we do not have equipment present to do cultures, EKGs, blood draws, or a wide range of services typical of primary care. In addition, we cannot easily take on a complex list of problems in a visit at the Tacoma clinic, as we are usually seeing a large number of patients, each with only one or two issues.

If you have 1-2 issues that can easily be dealt with without labs or other services – like a refill of a blood pressure medication – and the Tacoma location is more convenient for you, we are happy to schedule you at our Tacoma clinic. For a more complex list of issues or multiple symptoms, please make an appointment in Gig Harbor.