

Getting ready to see a GP: Tips for 18–24 year olds

Seeing a GP (doctor) can feel overwhelming especially if it's about your mental health. This fact sheet can help you prepare, ask the right questions and feel more confident during your appointment.



Booking your appointment

Booking a long appointment

- You need to make a long appointment (sometimes called a double appointment) for mental health concerns and plans. You can pick this option when booking online or asking the receptionist on the phone.

Find out how much it might cost:

- Your appointment may be bulk-billed (you don't pay anything if you have a Medicare card). You can ask the service about this before you book.
- If you don't have a Medicare card, ask the service or contact headspace to ask about low-cost or free support options. For more information visit [headspace.org.au](https://www.headspace.org.au)

- Many community health centres have counsellors and mental health workers, and some are free or low-cost.
- If you are at TAFE or university, most have free counselling for students. You can usually book an appointment through student services.

Plan how you will get there

- If you need to take public transport, make sure you can get there a bit before the appointment time.



Before your appointment

Think about what you want to get out of the visit. For example:

- understanding changes in your thoughts, feelings and behaviour.
- getting a diagnosis.
- finding out about treatment options.
- finding a mental health specialist (e.g. psychologist, psychiatrist).
- asking about medication.
- asking for a medical certificate (for work or study).

Remember you can:

- bring someone else to the appointment for support.
- write down your symptoms and questions before you go.



Bring along

- Medicare card (physical copy or in your digital wallet) or a photo of it on your mobile phone. You can access your card in the MyGov app and save it to your digital wallet. Many community health centres have counsellors and mental health workers, and some are free or low cost.
- If you are at TAFE, most have free counselling for students. You can usually book an appointment through student services.
- Any medicines you already take (including vitamins/supplements) in their original pack/bottle (if you have it). A photo or a list can also be useful and apps like MedAdvisor can also be useful.
- If you are visiting a new GP bring along any medical history from your other GP – you can ask your other GP to send your records to your new one. You will need to sign a form.



What your GP might ask you

It's OK if you don't feel comfortable or ready to answer all these questions.

- Have there been changes in your thoughts, feelings, or behaviour?
- What are the changes you're experiencing?
- How are things going with study, work, home or in your personal relationships?
- What triggers your symptoms or makes them worse?
- How long have you felt this way?
- Have you had thoughts of self-harm or suicide?
- What has helped you in the past when you have felt down?
- About your medical and family history.
- Have you had any past trauma?
- What is your support network and do you have hobbies?
- Do you vape, smoke, drink alcohol or take other drugs and how often?

It is ok to be honest with your GP. They will keep what you talk about private, even from the police and your family. They may need to tell someone else if they think you are in danger. If they have to tell someone else, they will try to talk to you first.

Questions you can ask your GP

- Do I have a mental health condition?
- What treatments are there?
- What can I do day-to-day to feel better?
- How would seeing a psychologist help?
- Are there online resources I can use?
- Could medicine help?

If the GP talks about medicine, you can ask:

- How does it work?
- Will it change how I feel?
- What are the possible side effects?
- How will I know if the medicine is working?
- If I start to feel better, can I stop taking it?
- What happens if I miss a dose?
- Are there things I shouldn't do while taking it (like drinking alcohol)?
- How long will I need to take it?



GP Mental Health Treatment Plan

You may decide to see a psychologist or other mental health worker as part of a GP Mental Health Plan. A mental health plan is like a simple guide to help you get support.

Your GP will write the plan with you, including:

- What is happening with your mental health.
- Your goals for your mental health.
- Treatments you will try.
- A letter for you to see a psychologist or other mental health worker. This is called a 'referral'.

Making a plan can help make seeing a psychologist or other mental health worker cheaper. It takes more than 20 minutes to make this plan together.

Your privacy

- Anything you talk about with your GP including your sexuality and gender is confidential, they won't tell anyone else without your permission unless they are worried about your safety.
- If they are worried about your safety, they will try to talk to you first before telling someone else.
- All the GP practice staff, including those at reception will keep your information confidential when you book an appointment.

Handy tips

- Note down any medicines you have already tried and have had bad reactions to.
- Use your phone or a notebook to take notes during the appointment. You can ask to record the appointment if that is easier.
- Ask your GP to repeat or write things down.
- Check that you have understood by repeating back in your own words.
- Ask for handouts or links about your health conditions and medicines.
- Remember it often takes a few visits to work out what is going on and how to best manage it. Book your next appointment before you leave so you don't forget.

If you need help right now and can't wait to see a GP, call 000 or go to the Emergency Department straight away.



Getting the right treatment

Getting the right treatment usually lowers the risk of harm in the long term. If you're worried about your safety, call a crisis line, contact your doctor, or reach out to a trusted person.

For support in a crisis:

- Emergency services **000**
- Beyond Blue 1300 224 636 www.beyondblue.org.au
- Lifeline Australia 13 11 14 www.lifeline.org.au
- 13YARN 13 92 76 www.13yarn.org.au
- Suicide Callback Service 1300 659 467 www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au

There are options for long-term support, such as:

- Trusted family member or trusted family friend
- School, university/TAFE, workplace counsellor
- GP or other health professional
- Kidshelpline 1800 55 1800
- Kidshelpline WebChat: www.kidshelpline.com.au/get-help/webchat-counselling
- headspace www.headspace.org.au
- ReachOut www.reachout.com

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