



Getting ready to see a GP: Tips for 13–17 year olds

This fact sheet offers tips on how to help you prepare for an appointment with a GP (doctor). You can go with a parent or someone you trust, or on your own depending on how old you are. If you bring someone, the GP still might ask to chat with you alone if you are comfortable.



Booking your appointment

Book 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:
- Remember you might share a Medicare card with other family members. They might see you have an appointment, but anything you share with the GP stays private.
- If you are 15 or older you can get your own Medicare card. For more information visit:
- 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.

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

You can prepare by writing down:

- What you've been feeling.
- When you started feeling this way.
- Do you feel this way all the time or only some of the time?
- What makes you feel better or worse.
- What you want to ask the GP.
- Medicines you have already tried and have had bad reactions to.
- Any questions you have.

If you're unsure what to say, your GP will help you.

Bring along:

- Medicare card or a copy of it on your mobile phone.
- 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.
- If you are visiting a new GP bring along any medical history from your other GP if you have it. You can ask your old GP to send your records to the new one. You will have to fill in a form.



What the GP might ask you

The GP might ask you:

- Have you noticed changes in your mood or behaviour?
- How are things going at school, work, at home, with friends?
- How is your sleep?
- Have you had thoughts of hurting yourself?
- Do you vape, smoke, drink alcohol or take other drugs?
- Has anyone in your family had mental health issues?

It's ok if you can't answer all the questions. Don't worry, just be honest and answer what you can.



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 the reception will keep your information confidential when you book an appointment.



Handy tips

- Use your phone or a notebook to write things down.
- Ask the GP to write down information for you. Ask the GP to repeat things if you don't understand.
- Check you have understood everything by repeating it back in your own words.
- Ask for handouts or links about your health conditions and medicines.
- If you took time off school or work, ask the doctor for a medical certificate.
- 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.**

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