

Preparing to visit the GP with your young person: Tips for Parents and Carers

This fact sheet offers tips to help you and your young person prepare for an appointment with a GP (doctor).

It gives advice on what to do before the appointment and think about what you and the young person will discuss. You could offer to help them write out their symptoms. Some young people may want to do this on their own and that's okay too. As a parent or carer, your support is valuable. Remember it can be reassuring for your young person to know you respect their need for space to speak alone with the GP if they prefer.

Setting expectations

Think about what you and the young person want from the appointment, to help work out what questions to ask your GP.

Are you seeking:

- to understand what the young person's symptoms could mean?
- a diagnosis?
- treatment recommendations?
- a referral to a psychologist, psychiatrist, or paediatrician?
- to investigate medical options (e.g. medicine on for the symptoms or other possible medical explanations for them)?
- a medical certificate to cover time off work/school.

Questions you can ask a GP

- What might be causing the current symptoms or behaviours?
- Are there any other health issues we should rule out first?
- What treatments are available?
- Are there medications that can help?
- As a parent what practical things can I do in my everyday life to improve the wellbeing of my child and myself right now?
- Do you think a referral to a psychologist, psychiatrist, or paediatrician is needed?
- Are there resources available online to help me understand what the young person is going through?
- How can I keep the young person safe if I'm worried about their safety?
- What should we expect in the short term and longer term?

The GP might ask you or the young person about some of these things

While your support is important. You can let your young person know they can speak with their GP alone if they'd prefer, to help them feel safe and respected.

- Changes in behaviours, thoughts or feelings.
- Symptoms the young person is experiencing.
- Changes in performance at school or significant changes at home.
- Triggers or things that make the young person feel worse.
- The length of time the young person has been feeling this way.
- Thoughts of suicide or deliberate self-harm.
- The young person's medical history.
- Family history of mental illness.
- Traumatic life experiences.
- Who the young person is close to, supported by, who their friends are, what do they enjoy doing.



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.

Your GP will write the plan with your young person, including:

- What is happening with their mental health
- Goals for their mental health
- Treatments they will try
- A letter for them 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.



Key Takeaways

- Try to make a long appointment if you know it is for mental health so you and your young person won't feel rushed.
- It's OK if you don't know the answers, or if it's hard for the young person to tell you or the GP – this is common.
- It often takes a few appointments to work out what is going on and how to best manage it.
- It's helpful for the GP to talk with the young person on their own at some stage when they are ready.
- They may decide to see a Psychologist or other Mental Health Practitioner under a GP Mental Health Plan. This plan always takes over 20 minutes to prepare.
- Encourage your young person to be honest about their alcohol and drug use.
- You can use your phone or a notebook to write things down.
- You can ask the GP to write down information for you and repeat things you or your young person don't understand.
- You can ask for handouts or links about health conditions and medicines.
- Make sure your young person has their Medicare card (physical or digital version) and a record of their medical history.
- Make sure your young person brings any medicines they already take (including vitamins/supplements) in their original pack/bottle (if you have it). A photo or a list can also be useful.

If your young person needs help right now and can't wait to see a GP, call 000 or take them to the Emergency Department straight away.

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