

Communicating with your General Practitioner

Always remember your GP is working for you

Having a good, supportive, trust worthy and reliable GP is very important. A good GP will work with you, support you and help you on your path to recovery.

A GP can work with you on general health needs and also refer you on to other services. There are things that you can do to help this relationship along.



What do you want?

Try to work out what you want from your doctor. Everyone has different needs. You may want help with your medications, access to other services, general support or specific advice. You have the right to choose to see a woman GP if that is what you want or to have a friend or nurse with you for certain procedures.

You may want a doctor you can access 24 hours or you may be happy with one with day appointments only. What you want will affect whether you choose to go to a large community health service or to a small medical centre.

Most doctors have a 'locum' service. This is a service through which you can get home visits at night or weekends. They will then pass on the information from this visit to your regular doctor.

If you find a doctor that you like and to stick with him/her they can develop a relationship with you; getting to know you when you are well and unwell. If your GP knows you, they are in a better position to provide ongoing care and to work out the best treatment plan for with you.

What can you expect?

Your GP should be non-judgemental, honest, respectful and keep things private. In return, you should be honest with your doctor about your symptoms, drug use, alcohol, exercise etc. This means they can give you the best possible care. Talking with your doctor about your support networks and how they may be involved in your life gives the doctor an idea of where you are in your communities and what extra support you may need.

How to choose a GP

- Are they easy to get to and from?
- Ask the practice if they have anyone who specialises in mental health or other areas that are important to you.
- Ask other people whether they have any recommendations.
- Do they bulk-bill (use Medicare)?
- Are they very busy? (If so there may be a longer wait for an appointment)
- Are urgent appointments available?
- Do they have a doctor available out of office hours?

Practical Hints for Working with Your Doctor

- Create a list of words or pictures of things you want to talk about with your doctor. This means you won't forget.
- Ring before your appointment to check if there is much of a wait (this is not always foolproof as emergencies may arise).
- When you first see your doctor, take your medication (or a list of it) with you.
- Make a longer appointment if you have more than one thing you want to discuss.



What if I am not happy with my doctor?

If you feel that you are not getting the service you need from your GP there are a number of things you can do.

You can talk to your doctor about any problems you are having, change doctors (your old doctor will be able to forward your medical records on), make a complaint to the practice where your doctor works or contact the Health Services Commissioner.

Some issues you may have are around confidentiality, lack of understanding from the doctor or a lack of connection with your doctor.

For more information

Ring the Power On Team at Women's Health West on 9689 9588 or look us up online at www.whwest.org.au

Source: Health Services Commissioner
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