

4. After your consultation

- **Do you need a follow up appointment?** If so, make an appointment before you leave.
- **Medications** - Don't forget that your local pharmacist can also provide you with information about your medications.
- **Have you forgotten something the doctor or nurse told you?** You can ring the surgery for more information or to clarify anything you are unsure of.



5. Unhappy with your treatment?

If you are not satisfied with any aspect of your experience with your doctor, there are a number of options for action:

- **Talk to your doctor, nurse or practice manager** - Be specific about what you are unhappy with, or any questions you have. It may be helpful to bring a support person or advocate with you to help you express your concerns clearly.
- **Seek a second opinion** - If, after talking to your doctor, you are still not happy with the outcome, you may wish to seek a second opinion from another doctor or nurse, or ask to be referred to a specialist.
- **To make a complaint:** If you have a complaint about any health care service which you have not been able to resolve you can contact the **Health Complaints Commissioner**, who can investigate your complaint. This is a free, independent service. You can contact the Health Complaints Commission by phone: 1300 766 725, or email: health.complaints@ombudsman.tas.gov.au.



GENERAL PRACTICE
south

This brochure was produced by General Practice South and revised in October 2009 with input from members of the Consumer Health Network.

Useful websites:

www.health.gov.au

Health*Insite* is a Department of Health and Ageing initiative. It contains a wide range of information including 15,300 approved resources and 1,034 topic pages.

www.hon.ch

The Health On the Net Foundation (HONcode) is a not-for-profit non-government site that assesses the credibility and reliability of health information on the Internet.

Getting the most from your visit to the doctor



Helpful hints for your general practice consultation.

1. Preparing for your visit

Making an appointment

- **Do you need a longer appointment?** If you need to see the doctor or nurse for something specific (eg a Pap smear) or a number of different issues, you can ask for a **longer appointment**.
- **Do you have particular needs?** If you or a person you care for has particular needs or challenging behaviour, it can be helpful to mention this to the practice staff so they can suggest the most appropriate time for your appointment.
- **Do you have mobility difficulties?** Let the practice know if you need assistance with access to the building.
- **How much will it cost?** You can ask if you will be out of pocket, and whether you need to pay anything on the day, so you can be prepared.
- **If English is not your first language**, you can request an interpreter when you book your appointment.

Before the visit

- **What do you want to tell the doctor or nurse?**
Make a list of your concerns and put them in order of importance. Take the list with you to your appointment. The doctor or nurse might suggest you need additional appointments.
- **Do you want to take a support person with you?**
This can be helpful, if you think you might need help to communicate your concerns, or have trouble hearing, understanding or remembering things.

Your local doctor's surgery is:



2. Getting there

What to take with you

- Your **Medicare Card** and any **concession cards** (eg pension card, Health Care Card, DVA Gold Card).
- **Clinical information:** your list of concerns / symptoms, list of medications, recent relevant test results / X-rays, patient-held records.

Running late

- **If you are running late**, or need to cancel, make sure you ring the surgery to let them know. Some surgeries may charge for missed appointments.
- **Is the doctor running late?** To minimise waiting time, it can be helpful to ring the surgery to see if the doctor or nurse is running late. This will allow you to adjust your arrival time, or reschedule your appointment for another day.

When you arrive at the surgery

- It is important to **let the reception staff know you have arrived**. There may be paperwork or other things to deal with before you see the doctor or nurse.
- You can always ask the reception staff if you would like to speak to them in private.

3. During your consultation

Who will you see?

- Many doctors now have nurses working within the surgery. As part of your care you may see the practice nurse as well as the doctor.

With the doctor:

- If this is your first visit to the practice, the doctor may ask about your general health status and vaccination history at the start of the consultation.
- Explain your concerns / why you are there (refer to your list).
- Take notes of important information, or **ask the doctor for a copy** of information about medications (especially any new medications or complex dosage instructions).
- **If you don't understand something** - ask for clarification or more information. If you have a support person with you, check that they understand. **Don't be embarrassed** about asking questions, or asking the doctor to repeat or rephrase something. GPs understand that when people are anxious about their health it can be harder to 'take in' information.
- **Referrals** - if your doctor refers you to a specialist or to have medical tests it is important to know why you are being referred and how long the doctor thinks you should need to wait to get an appointment. If you have trouble making an appointment within a reasonable time, contact your doctor for advice. Be sure you know **how** and **when** you will get the results of any tests.

If you are on a pension or low income, you may wish to ask how much it will cost, or if it's possible for your doctor to refer you to see a specialist at the public hospital.