

Making the Most of Your Appointment

Follow the
PLAN

Prepare for your visit

Book an longer visit if you need to. It is a good idea to book a long visit if you have more than one thing to talk about, or it is the first time seeing this doctor.

You can get long appointments for:

- Yearly health checks for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people or a people with intellectual disability.
- Making a mental health care plan
- Making a chronic condition management plan

These may be bulk-billed (you don't pay anything) – ask the service before you book.

Make a list of questions to ask your doctor and choose the most important. This will help you get more out of the time with your doctor and help you to remember everything you want to ask.

Try Healthdirect's Question Builder: www.healthdirect.gov.au/question-builder

Take a summary of your medical information, such as:

- Contacts of other doctors/health providers
- Current health conditions
- Past health conditions and operations
- Medicines
- Allergies
- Family history of major illnesses
- Blood test and imaging results
- Advance Care Plan

Take a support person with you - they can help you remember what is said and help you with any hard news.

Listen and share information about:

- any new symptoms (signs of illness) – what and how long
- what medicines, herbs and vitamins you take
- if there are any problems with your medicines or treatments
- your needs and values, like:
 - your lifestyle – e.g. you need to drive for work so can't take certain medicines
 - cultural or religious practices – e.g. you need medicines to be halal
- if you need help to follow a treatment plan

Ask questions

Ask the health worker if you don't understand anything. Ask if they can explain it another way or show you a diagram, picture or video. Use your list of questions and make sure you ask:

- What is my main health problem?
- What do I need to do next?
- Why is it important that I do this?

Use **Check Back** to make sure you understand (adapted from checkback.org):



Note down what you need to do

Write down the main points or ask if you can record them using voice notes. Make a list of what you need to do, such as:

- Book another appointment
- Get a test or scan – check if you need to go to a specific place and if you need an appointment to get the results.
- Start, stop or change a medicine
- Who to contact if you have more questions

If they send you to a specialist or other health service, ask for a copy of your **referral letter**. It is a good idea to call or email the specialist to check they have got it.

After your appointment...

Support yourself and manage emotions that may come up. Talk to someone you trust and do something kind for yourself.

Get any tests or scans and check with your doctor if you need an appointment to talk about test results. If you use My Health Record, you can get most pathology test results after 7 days by logging into My Health Record or in the my health app.

Track any changes in you health, if you have a new illness or start a new treatment. Write down what you are feeling and when it happened. You could also write down things that trigger your condition, like foods, weather or activities. Ask you doctor for a template or try an app.

Speak to your pharmacist about any changes to your medicines. They can help you make sure you are taking them correctly.

Learn more...



Watch some tips on getting the most from an appointment from HCCA Members: <https://youtu.be/6sF9JCLaplc>



Listen to the Health Literacy Out Loud Podcast: When Patients Create Their Own Medical Binders: A Powerful Way to Get Organized and Feel More in Control:
<http://traffic.libsyn.com/healthliteracy/OsborneGaglio.mp3>

- Read some tips from a doctor: www.webmd.com/men/features/tips-for-a-successful-doctor-visit#3
- An example of how to write your own medical history: chronicillnessstraumastudies.com/patient-medical-history-new-doctor-appointments/
- Read about writing a family medical history: www.healthdirect.gov.au/family-medical-history
- Download a symptom tracker template: copingtogether.med.unsw.edu.au/interactive-tools/symptom-diary
- **The Council of Intellectual Disabilities My Health Matters Folder** contains resources to support people with intellectual disability or cognitive impairment to build a good medical history and communicate with their doctors. cid.org.au/resource/my-health-matters-folder/
- **The Spectrum Intersections Self Advocacy In Health Care Toolkit** is designed for and by LGBTQIA+ Autistic People to help them manage their health information and communicate with health professionals. inclusionmelbourne.org.au/projects/spectrum/

Useful apps

- **my health** – Australian Government app to view your My Health Record, including test results and prescriptions: www.digitalhealth.gov.au/myhealth
- **Flaredown** – Very detailed symptom and trigger tracking app: flaredown.com
- **Life Notes** – Simple Android app for offline symptom tracking: lifenotes.fr
- Ask your pharmacy if they have an app you can use to manage your scripts and set reminders.

Healthdirect has a list of apps from trusted health organisations: www.healthdirect.gov.au/health-and-wellbeing-apps

Updated August 2025. This resource provides general information that is accurate at the time of publication. It is not professional medical or legal advice.

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