

Getting the most out of your GP appointment



Most GP appointments are just 10 minutes long. That doesn't give you much time to explain your symptoms, get a diagnosis, discuss a treatment plan, and get your questions answered.

To try and get the most out of your appointment, go prepared. Plan ahead what you need to tell the doctor, don't try to talk about too many things, and always start with the most important issue.

Things to consider

Before your appointment:

- Write down details of your symptoms, including when they started and what makes them better or worse
- Write down any important questions you want to ask.

During your appointment:

- Don't be afraid to ask if you don't understand something
- Write things down or take a family member or friend to help you remember the details.

Before you leave your appointment, make sure you understand what will happen next.

Four key questions

These questions can help you make the right decisions about your healthcare.

1. **What are the benefits?** Make sure you understand the benefits to your health if you agree to the procedure/treatments
2. **What are the risks?** You should be fully informed about the effects of this decision, both short and long term. Take time to consider your care after your treatment and how you'll manage this
3. **Are there any alternatives?** Make sure you're aware of all the options, so you can decide if a different option better suits your healthcare needs
4. **What if I do nothing?** Remember that just because treatment is available, it doesn't mean it's right for you. Make sure you fully understand the impact on your health if you do nothing, and the effect of time on your condition.