



Patient Participation Group

HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR APPOINTMENT WITH YOUR DOCTOR

Before you make an appointment to see your GP, consider the alternatives. The pharmacist behind the counter at your local chemist may be able to give you the help you need, so you won't have to spend time waiting for an appointment. Pharmacists are highly trained health professionals, and may offer a wider range of health services than you might think. Pharmacists can help with:

- Mild skin conditions, such as [acne](#) and [eczema](#)
- Coughs and [colds](#), including nasal congestion and sore throats
- Minor cuts and bruises
- Constipation and [haemorrhoids \(piles\)](#)
- Hay fever and [allergies](#)
- Aches and pains, such as [headaches](#), earache and backache
- Indigestion, [diarrhoea](#) and threadworms
- [Period pain](#) and thrush
- [Warts, verruca's](#), mouth ulcers and cold sores
- [Athlete's foot](#)
- [Nappy rash](#) and teething
- Some pharmacies can provide truss fittings, stoma products and incontinence supplies
- [Emergency contraception](#) (the morning-after pill)
- Needle and syringe exchange services
- [Pregnancy tests](#). Most pharmacies can provide pregnancy test kits, and some have a private area where you can use the kit
- [NHS stop-smoking courses](#)

As your doctor only has 10 minutes allocated for your appointment, you need to be able to make the most of that time. If you are worried and nervous you may forget important things to tell your doctor so it may help to write things down before your appointment, guided by the questions below.

- When did the problem begin, try and think of the date if possible
- What are your main symptoms
- Be honest about what you think may be causing the problem, and don't be embarrassed. Your doctor will have seen and heard it all before
- If the main symptom of your problem is pain, can you score your pain on a scale of 1 – 10? With 1 being very mild to 10 being unbearable
- If pain is a symptom, where is the pain
- Is there a pattern to your symptoms
- Have the symptoms got worse, stayed the same or do they fluctuate up and down
- What makes the symptoms worse, and what makes them better



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- Is your sleep affected
- Is your ability to work or manage at home impaired
- Has your appetite or mood altered
- Have there been changes in your lifestyle recently
- Have you had this problem before, if so when and how was it managed
- Do you take any over the counter medicines
- Do you have any allergies
- It's sometimes helpful to keep a diary of your symptoms

It may be necessary for your doctor to examine you, so try to wear clothing and footwear that is easy to take off and put on again.

If you are worried about remembering everything the doctor tells you, or are generally anxious about your appointment or any examination, take someone with you. You can also ask for a chaperone at reception.

Be truthful with your doctor; if you haven't been taking medication or advice previously given tell them, so they don't think they've made the wrong diagnosis previously.

Never be afraid to ask if you do not understand something.

Research shows many patients go away from seeing their doctor only remembering one third of what they have been told, so take a notebook to write down the main points of what you were told.

Don't always expect a prescription. If you are given medication follow the doctor's instructions and if you have any side effects from any medication prescribed let the doctor know straightaway.

INFORMATION

Many patients like to use the internet to gain information about their problems. However, not everything you find on the internet is correct. Not all research results are valid. It is best to go to a website that has the most up to date and clinically proven advice.

NHS website – www.nhs.uk

If you haven't access to the internet there is information in public libraries, bookshops and patient support groups.

Keyworth Medical Practice also have a range of books on sale at £4.95