

10 top tips to get the most out of your GP appointment

We know from our conversations with the public that some patients report feeling rushed during appointments and struggling to make themselves heard.

As appointment times can be limited, in several areas local Healthwatch are promoting tips that could help you get the most out of visiting your GP.



We've pulled together some of their top suggestions.

- **Is your issue urgent? Do you need to see a specific GP?**
Is it important you are seen quickly or would you rather wait for an appointment with a particular GP? If you have a long-term illness would you benefit from seeing a GP who knows your history personally?
- **Take notes to help you**
Before you see your GP, be clear beforehand what you want to say. Make a note of your symptoms, worries and any questions that you would like to ask.
- **Many problems? See if you can book a double appointment**
If you have a number of issues that you would like to discuss with your GP, see whether it is possible to book a double appointment to give you more time to talk them through.

- **Take a list of your medicines – prescribed or otherwise**
Bring a list of any medication you are taking, including over-the-counter and/or alternative medicines, or anything prescribed after a hospital visit. This includes tablets, liquids or creams. Your GP needs to know about everything you are taking.
- **Discuss important things first and stick to the point**
Make sure you tell the doctor about the important things first and try to get to the point. Do not feel you have to justify being there first.
- **Not clear on treatment plan? Ask again**
Make sure you fully understand the next steps before you leave the room. If you don't, then don't be afraid of asking your GP to go through the plan again.
- **Ask who to contact if you have any more questions**
You may think of questions that you would like to ask after your appointment. Find out who you can contact to ask questions, as well as any support groups that can provide reliable information.
- **If you need support, take a relative, carer or friend**
If you feel your situation needs it, take a relative or friend for support. They can help you understand or explain.
- **Unhappy? Ask to see another GP**
If you're not happy, you can ask to see another GP in the practice. You can also change GP practices, but you should as a first step always discuss your concerns with a practice staff member first.
- **Could the practice nurse deal with your problem?**
In many cases, a practice nurse could deal with your concern, so consider this as an alternative to making an appointment with a GP. The surgery may also run special clinics such as asthma and diabetes, so make sure you find out.

If you would like to know more about the questions you can ask your doctor to get the most out of your consultation, take a look at the comprehensive list developed by NHS Choices.

These tips are based on guidance from Healthwatch Trafford, Healthwatch Central West London, Which? and NHS Choices.

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