

# All you need to know about General Practitioners (GPs)



## Transition Support Service

### What is the role of a GP?

A GP can also be known as a local or family doctor. They provide comprehensive, continued and coordinated individualised health care from childhood to adulthood in the community. They have general knowledge about a range of different medical issues and some have a particular interest or expertise in certain health conditions/disabilities. It is important to have a GP that suits you and that you feel comfortable with.

### What can my GP help with?

Your GP can help with a range of health issues, communicate with your specialists and refer you to other medical professionals if needed. During and beyond the transition process, your GP can provide support in coordinating your care so that it best meets your needs. You can also access additional supports through your GP including:

#### 1. The Chronic Disease Management (CDM) Plan

If you have a health condition/disability that requires multidisciplinary care, you can book a longer appointment with your GP who can help you put together a GP Management Plan (GPMP). This is what you will need to access the CDM and allows you to access a maximum of five allied health services per calendar year from eligible providers who are registered with Medicare Australia. If a provider accepts the Medicare benefit as full payment for the service, there will be no out-of-pocket cost however if not, you will need to pay the difference.

Click here to download the [Chronic Disease Management patient information](#).

#### 2. The 'Better Access' initiative for Mental Health care

Through the 'Better Access' initiative, you can access Medicare rebates for up to 10 individual or 10 group allied mental health services a year by a GP, psychiatrist, psychologist or eligible social worker or occupational therapist. You can be referred through:

- A GP under the GP Mental Health Treatment Plan
- A referred psychiatrist or paediatrician

If you require additional support after your 10 sessions, please consult with your GP.

Click here to download the [Better Access to Mental Health Care](#) fact sheet.

### Why is it important to have your own GP?

Having your own GP will be of benefit to you and may have a key role during your transition and transfer to adult health care, as they can communicate with your specialists, refer you to other healthcare professionals and link you in to other supports if needed. A regular GP is likely to know you well and have a good overall understanding of your health care needs, thereby helping you to make the right choices for your treatment. Your regular GP will have your medical records and receive correspondence from your hospital visits, so they can be an important part of your health care.

# All you need to know about General Practitioners (GPs)

## How do I choose the right GP?

Here are some things to consider when finding a GP that's right for you:

1. I feel comfortable with them
2. I am able to express my needs to them
3. I am able to share personal information with them
4. I am able to ask difficult questions
5. I feel listened to
6. I understand the information they give to me
7. I feel that they understand my health condition/disability

Other key considerations may include:

1. Location – can I get there easily and on my own?
2. What are the clinic's opening hours?
3. Do they make home visits?
4. Are they able to speak the same language as me?
5. Do they have male or female GPs?
6. Do they have extra qualifications or areas of expertise which might help me?

## How do I find a GP?

1. Ask your friends, family, neighbours or school contacts for recommendations
2. Ask your local pharmacist or other medical professionals who have dealings with doctors in your area
3. Ask your specialist doctor(s) or general paediatrician at The Royal Children's Hospital
4. Contact the Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) and ask for a list of the doctors practising in your area ([www.agpn.com.au/](http://www.agpn.com.au/))
5. Professional associations such as the Australian Medical Association (AMA) and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) may also be able to help

## Costs

GPs can sometimes bulk bill your visit which means that there is no gap payment and Medicare covers the full cost of your consultation. Some GP clinics bulk bill concession card holders. It's worth asking if this applies for you. If your GP doesn't bulk bill, only some of the costs will be covered and you have to pay the gap amount. In this instance, do ask the practice how much the gap amount is, as this may vary.

Once you've made a choice, take the plunge and go in for a consultation. There's no obligation to go back to a doctor if you're not satisfied. Your final choice should be a GP who you feel comfortable with and whose knowledge and judgment you trust.

## Make the most of your appointment

Be prepared before you arrive with any questions or requests. Take a list of your current medications and dosages, along with information regarding specific details such as dates when you may have experienced symptoms. Be honest with your GP as he/she is there to help you. Always ask questions if you don't understand.

## Hospitalisation

If you go into hospital for any reason, it is important to give the hospital staff your GP's contact details and make sure these details are current and correct on the hospital database. This is important during your transfer to adult care too as your specialists may change. Once you have been discharged from hospital, ask if a discharge summary can be sent to your GP. If not, ask for a copy to take with you.

Make a follow up appointment with your GP and let them know about your hospital admission, any tests and results that you had and if your medications changed. Make sure they have a copy of the discharge summary for your file at the GP practice.

Visit your GP at least once per year for a 'once over' to keep you at your best (a bit like getting your car serviced to pick up any problems before they get worse).

## Keep a file

It is important to keep a file of important information about your health. Do include:

- Business cards and/or contact details of your health professionals
- A current list of all your prescribed and non-prescribed medications
- Recent test results
- A summary of your medical history, care plans and other relevant documents such as your blood type and allergies

## Keep track of your medical record

If you move to another GP practice, your medical records should follow you. You can either authorise your old practice to provide a copy or summary of your health information to your new GP, or ask your new GP to request the information for you.

For more info contact:

The RCH Transition Support Service on **9345 4980**  
or visit [www.rch.org.au/transition](http://www.rch.org.au/transition)