



the facts:  
getting help



headspace  
National Youth Mental Health Foundation

# getting help from a General Practitioner (GP)

## What is a General Practitioner?

**GPs are medical doctors that are trained to help you with physical or mental health concerns such as:**

- sexual health and contraception
- alcohol and other drug use
- relationship issues
- your mood or worrying thoughts
- your sleep, appetite or ability to concentrate
- medical conditions, diagnosed or undiagnosed
- other physical or mental health concerns.

## How do I find a GP?

**You could:**

- ask a friend, family member or someone you know for a recommendation
- drop into a medical centre in your local area and ask about their services
- ask your school, TAFE or uni (they sometimes have their own medical services)
- do a search on [healthdirect.gov.au](http://healthdirect.gov.au)

If you're comfortable with your family GP, they can be a good place to start. Even if they know your family, a GP is still required to keep your information private. If you're worried about this, you should talk to them.

You can also contact your nearest headspace centre, they might have GPs and can also connect you with other health workers.



## Medicare

If you're listed on a joint Medicare card, you can use it. The appointment may be listed on the Medicare record for that card – which means the card owner may be able to see that you've had an appointment. However, what you speak about is kept private.

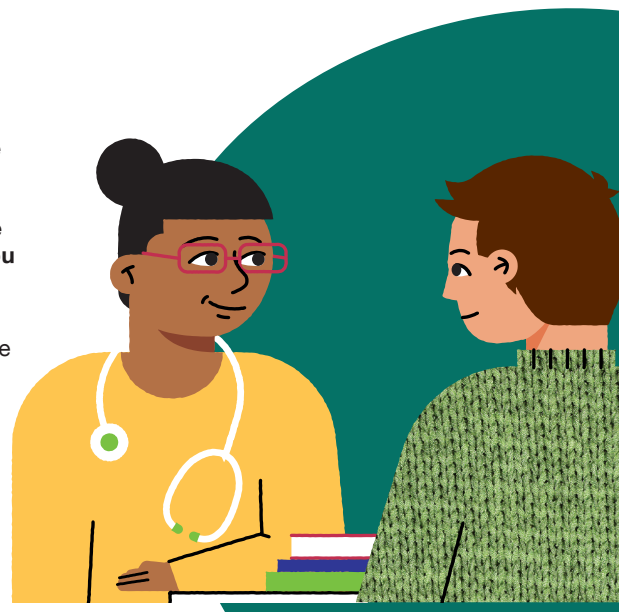
If you're Australian and over 15 years of age you can get a Medicare card. For more information or to apply for your own card see [servicesaustralia.gov.au/medicare](http://servicesaustralia.gov.au/medicare).

If you're over 14 years of age, you're able to consent to simple health care treatments without involving a parent or guardian. Check out Youth Law Australia for more information.

## How much will a GP cost?

**Some GPs provide free ('bulk billed') appointments to young people and this is usually the case with headspace GPs. However, sometimes you might be charged a 'gap' fee (an extra cost). If you're worried about this, check when you book your appointment.**

To be bulk billed, you'll need a Medicare card or know your Medicare number (reception will be able to help you with your number).



## How to book an appointment

- Some GPs offer online bookings. Search for a GP on [healthdirect.gov.au](http://healthdirect.gov.au) to help you find one. You could also phone or drop into a medical centre.
- You'll need to provide your contact information, but you don't need to explain what the issue is to reception.
- If you have more than two things to discuss, or want a mental health care plan, request a longer appointment.
- If you feel uncomfortable going by yourself, bring someone you trust.



## What does an appointment look like?

- Standard appointments usually take between 10-15 minutes.
- First appointments with GPs at headspace centres are usually longer than a standard appointment. You might be seen by another health worker too – depending on what you want to speak about.
- The GP will ask a range of questions about your health and may want to do a physical check-up, like blood pressure, heart rate and temperature, or examine other parts of your body relevant to your issue.
- A GP can't do any sort of examination without explaining why it's necessary, what will happen and getting your permission.
- The GP will then discuss the concern with you and talk about what you can do next. Remember to ask your GP questions about your health concern so you know exactly what's going on. Try to be open and honest about your concerns and situation so that you can make a plan together.

## Your right to privacy

By law, all GPs need to keep information about their patients private. This means they can't discuss your visit with anyone else, but there are a few exceptions. If a GP thinks you're likely to harm yourself or someone else, they have a responsibility to make sure you stay safe, so they may need to tell other people.

The only other time a doctor will release your information is if ordered to do so by a court, but this is rare.

If you want to know more about your rights to privacy and confidentiality, ask your GP to talk it through with you at any stage of your appointment.

It's OK if you don't understand something. Your GP is there to help you and has seen all sorts of issues. If you think you'll forget or feel too awkward, write down your concerns before the appointment and give this to your GP.



## Getting support

No matter what physical or mental health issue you are experiencing, GPs are there to help you.



If you or someone you know is going through a tough time you can get help and support from headspace, your school, TAFE or university wellbeing service or your local health provider. For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre, or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)

If you need immediate assistance call 000 or to speak to someone urgently, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.

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