

Youth Friendly General Practice – Student Handout

What do GPs do for young people?

You can see a GP whenever you want for any health concern, including both mental and physical health. Many young people visit GPs for skin conditions or respiratory problems but few seek assistance for other concerns such as study pressure, stress or mental illness.

You can choose to visit a GP with your parents or caregiver or you can go alone.

Making an appointment

You can make an appointment for yourself by phoning a surgery or practice and making an appointment. You do not need to say anything further to the receptionist about what the appointment is for. You may not be able to see a doctor on the day you phone – there is often a waiting time, particularly in areas where there is a GP shortage. There are some clinics where you can walk in and see whichever doctor is on duty at the clinic that day. One way of finding a GP is to ask friends for recommendations.

Visiting a GP

At a first appointment there may be some paperwork to fill out at the surgery. Some places may ask you for your details, such as name, address and phone number, when you call. At other places you can simply come in for your first appointment and they ask you to fill in a short form about yourself.

Paying for a visit

It is a good idea to find out how to pay for the appointment when you make the appointment. Some doctors bulk bill, which means the doctor charges Medicare directly for the consultation and there is no upfront cost to the patient. Other doctors bill privately, which means the patient pays for the consultation and then claims back some of the cost from Medicare.

If you do not have a Medicare card, the doctor's receptionist can take your name and call the Medicare hotline to get your or your parent's/guardian's Medicare number. You can get your own Medicare card from age 15. For more information, see:

<http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/subjects/young-people-becoming-independent>

Can I make decisions and choices about my own health?

Young people are able to see a doctor or health worker confidentially and make decisions about their health if the doctor thinks they are mature enough to fully understand their health problems and the treatment options. There is no fixed age for this but it is usually about 14 years of age. Often the doctor will encourage young people to involve their parent, especially if they are under 16.

What if my parents want to look at my health records?

Always make it clear to a GP or other health worker if you do not want your parents to have access to your health record, particularly if you are under 14 years of age. If you are under 14 years of age a health service's ability to restrict your parent's access to your record will depend on a number of factors including your maturity and the circumstances of the request. You can discuss this with a GP.

Generally, if you are 14 years or over, your parents cannot see your health records unless you agree to this, or unless this may reduce a threat to your own or somebody else's safety, welfare or wellbeing. If you have any concerns about this then you should raise it with the GP.

Why should my parents or caregivers be involved in my medical care?

As a young person it is important that you involve your parents or caregivers in your health decision-making. Their involvement may provide you with the support needed to access the right medical care and make sound health decisions.

If you do not feel supported by your parents or caregivers to seek medical advice you can talk to your welfare teacher or another supportive adult about your concerns.