

The Benefits of Having a Regular GP

What is a General Practitioner (GP)?

A GP (also called a family doctor or local doctor) is a doctor trained to assess and take care of health conditions across all diseases and all ages.

GPs are often who you first to talk to when you don't feel well or are worried about your health. A GP may ask you questions, do a physical examination or refer you for special tests (eg blood tests or x-rays) to work through your worries.

This will help your GP make a plan to care for your health worries. The plan may involve:

- Specific advice or counselling
- Prescribing medicines
- Referring to other medical specialists, hospital or other health care professionals (eg psychologist, physiotherapist, dietician, diabetes educator)

The benefits of having a regular GP and GP Clinic

- Your GP will build an understanding of your health needs and other reasons that affect your health
- Building trust with your GP will help you to talk openly and feel supported
- Your GP will be able to check your medical history when assessing your symptoms and planning your health care.
- Your GP can organise your care where you have many services involved
- Your GP can help you keep healthy by doing regular health checks, giving vaccines and advice on diet, exercise and healthy living.

How do I find a GP?

You can find a GP or general practice clinic in your area from the National Health Services Directory – Health Direct:

www.healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services

Asking your friends, family and other health professionals for suggestions are also helpful.





The following factors affect the search for the right GP and clinic for you:

- Hours of opening. Are after hours and weekend appointments offered?
- Are you able to get care when your regular GP is not available or out of hours. Do other GPs in the clinic offer cover? Are there any arrangements in place for after hours?
- What is the length of a standard consultation (appointment)? Are longer appointments available if needed? Does the GP do home visits? Are urgent appointments available?
- Practice billing policy. What is the cost of a consultation? Does the Medicare rebate fully cover the cost of the consultation (bulk-billing) or is there an out-of-pocket or gap fee?
- Areas of special interest/skill. Some GPs do more training in areas such as women's/men's health, mental health, sexual health, chronic disease care.
- Languages spoken
- Is the clinic easy for you to get to or close to public transport?

What next?

When you find a GP/practice that you think meets your needs, make an appointment. It is often helpful if your first appointment is not for urgent care. This allows you to talk about your care and make sure you feel comfortable with the GP and clinic when attending future appointments.

When sent home from hospital or another service, take the letter from the hospital and other health related information to the appointment.

Please carry the contact details of your regular GP with you and give them when you go to any hospital.

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