

The Benefits of Having a Regular GP

What is a General Practitioner (GP)?

A GP (sometimes called a family doctor or local doctor) is a doctor who is trained to assess and manage health conditions across all disease categories and all age groups.

GPs are commonly the first point of contact when you feel unwell or are worried about your health. A GP may ask you questions, conduct a physical examination or refer you for special tests (eg blood tests or x-rays) to work through your concerns.

This will help your GP to develop a plan to manage your health concern. The plan may include:

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

The benefits of having a regular GP/GP Clinic

- Your GP will build an understanding of your health needs and other factors that impact your health
- Building trust with your GP will help you to talk openly and feel supported
- Your GP will have access to your complete medical history when assessing your symptoms and planning your management
- Your GP can coordinate your care where multiple services are involved
- GPs can help you to maintain your health by providing regular health checks, immunisations and giving advice on diet, exercise and healthy living.

How do I find a GP?

To find a GP or clinics in your area, you can look up the National Health Services Directory – Health Direct:

<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services>

Recommendations from your network of friends, family and other health providers are also helpful.

Finding a GP/clinic that is right for you will be affected by a number of factors.

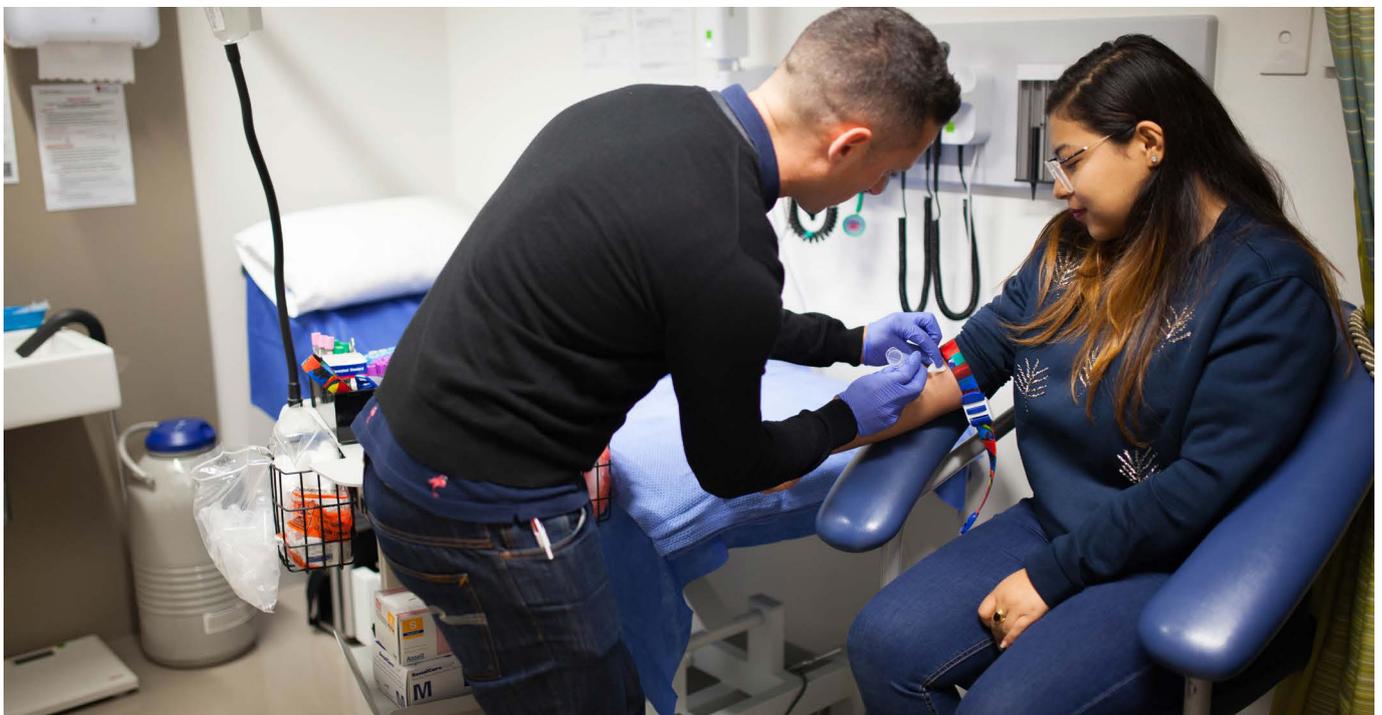
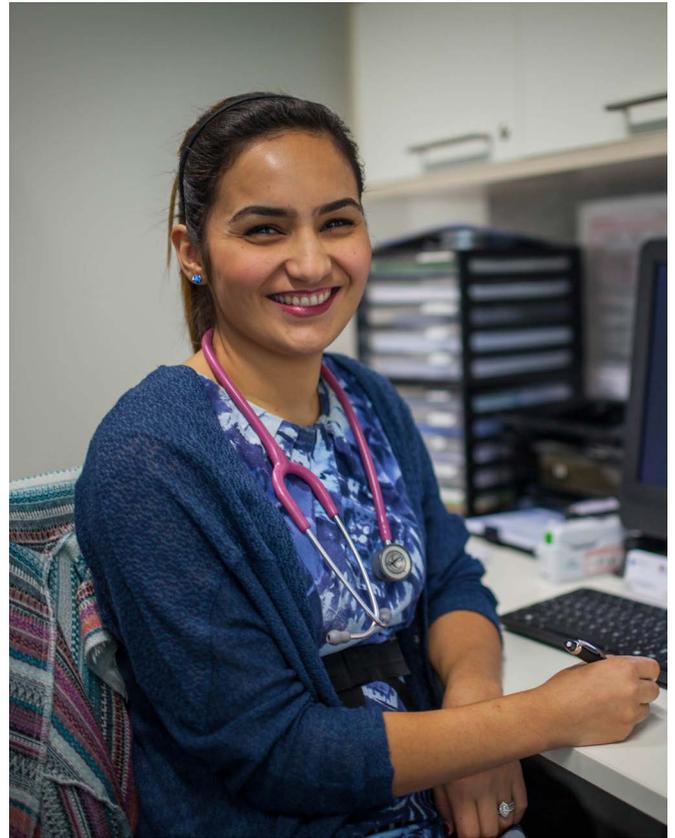
- Hours of opening. Are after hours/weekend appointments offered?
- Access to care when your regular GP is not available or out of hours. Do other GPs in the clinic provide cover? Are there any arrangements in place for after hours?
- What is the length of a standard consultation (appointment)? Are longer consultations available if required? 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/gap fee?
- Areas of special interest/expertise. Some GPs undertake additional training in areas such as women's/men's health, mental health, sexual health, chronic disease management
- Languages spoken
- Geographical considerations/proximity 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 at the time of a health crisis. This permits you to establish your care and ensure the clinic is a place you would be comfortable to visit when you have a specific health concern.

If you have been recently discharged from hospital or another service, take your discharge summary or other health related information to the appointment.

Please carry the contact details of your regular GP and provide them when you are seen at any hospital.



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