

# Support Person

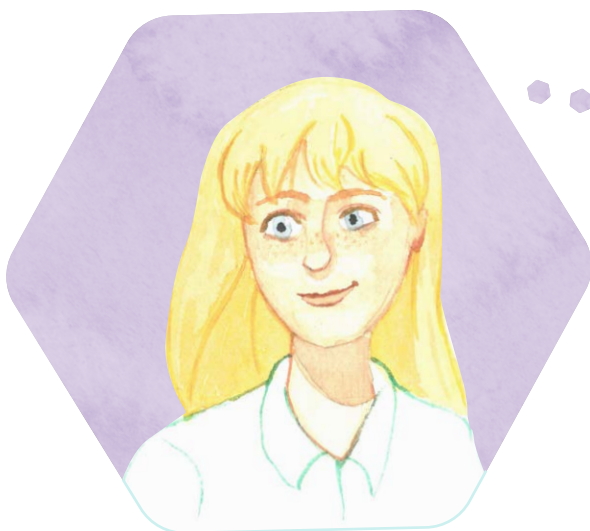
Sometimes when visiting your General Practitioner (GP) or another health professional, it may be helpful or important to have a support person with you. This section answers some common questions about a support person and lists when a support person may be helpful.

## What is a support person?

A support person is a person you trust that can help you to visit the GP. This person can help you with some, or all of the steps in planning and visiting a GP. Sometimes a support person may be a formal person, for example, an advocate or a support worker. Sometimes they can be a trusted family member, partner or friend.

## Do I have a support person?

Some autistic women have a support person that helps them with tasks they need support with. This may be a family member, partner, trusted friend or formal person. Sometimes when you're unwell, a friend or family member may offer to help. Or you may ask a friend or family member to be your support person. You may need to ask more than one person before you find someone who is free to help you.



*“My Mum calls the clinic and books me in. That really helps when I’m not feeling well.”*

— Autistic woman talking about support provided by a family member.

# Can I choose whether I have a support person?

Yes, you can choose whether to have a support person. There may be times in your life when you have a support person and also times when you can manage on your own without a support person.

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## Times when a support person may be helpful

- When you are unwell and need physical help.
  - If you feel overwhelmed or have shut down.
  - To get to an appointment on time, if that's something you find hard.
  - If you need someone to write down and remember things that the GP has said.
  - If you need help after your appointment with the things you need to do.
  - If you want some emotional support during, before, and after the appointment.
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## Times when a support person may not be helpful

- When you want to discuss private information with the GP that you don't want to share in front of another person.
  - If a support person is pressuring you to take them when you visit the GP, or not being supportive in other ways.
  - If the support person is making the situation more stressful for you.
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If you want to talk about private information with the GP you may want to choose a support person who you normally wouldn't take with you. This support person may be a friend who respects your views. You can also ask your support person to support you for part of the appointment.

## My support person is being over-protective or pressuring me, what can I do?

Talk with your support person about your rights and your right to see a GP by yourself. Share the resources in the links below about rights and responsibilities. Let your support person know that you value their support and that you need some privacy. If they can't support you and your rights, you may decide to choose a different support person.

## I'd like to discuss a sensitive issue with the GP without my support person present. How can I arrange this?

Let your support person know that you'd like to talk to the GP by yourself. Remind them that you have a right to privacy and that you value their support. Share the resources in the links about rights and responsibilities. If it's difficult to talk with your support person about this you can write a note to the GP. Write the note before the appointment and bring it with you when you see the GP.

For example:

Dear GP, please ask my support person to leave the room so that we can talk in private.  
Regards, your name

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## Resources on the role, rights and responsibilities of a support person

The Office of the Public Advocate has more information about appointing a [Medical Support Person](#).

[Queensland Health has a fact sheet](#) on the rights of family, carers and other support persons.

The Australian Government Department of Health has information on rights and responsibilities of carers and support persons in the [Mental Health statement of rights and responsibilities](#).

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The next step is to work out what you want to say to the GP. The [What to say to the GP worksheet](#) is designed to help you or you can make your own notes.

If you're ready to book an appointment with a GP you can use the [Examples of what to say when booking an appointment with a GP by phone](#).

If you've already booked an appointment the [Before the appointment checklist](#) can help you to get organised.

See other sections of this guide or download the complete guide [here](#).