

# Visiting the General Practitioner (GP)

When visiting the GP you can ask for changes to be made to meet your communication preferences and sensory needs.

## Communicating with your GP

Use the Checklist: [How I want to communicate with the GP](#) to work out what the GP needs to know. You can fill in the checklist yourself, or with a support person. The completed checklist is a reminder of what to tell the GP about how you need to communicate during the appointment. For example, if you note in the checklist that you need more time to read you can let the GP know this.

During our consultation with autistic women they generously shared their experiences for others to learn from.

*“ I like to practise what I want to say to the GP. For example, what’s different to my usual state. It makes it easier to explain when I get to my appointment.”*

*“ In the past GPs have inferred information and I’m meant to ‘fill in the blanks’. I can’t do that. I need the GP to be specific and direct in the information they give me and the questions they ask.”*

*“ I ask my GP to explain why things need to happen during the appointment. For example, why do I need to fill out this mental health questionnaire? It helps me to understand.”*

Take notes or ask the GP or your support person ([Link to support person](#)) to write down or email, information from your appointment. For example, notes about treatment, referrals, medication, other health advice and what you need to do after the appointment. The free Abridge App is listed in the [Resources](#) section. It can be used to record conversations with the GP and other health professionals. Ask the GP if it’s OK to record the conversation and get their consent before you start recording.

# Asking for written information

When the GP has finished asking questions, they will probably give you information about what is happening and make some suggestions to help with your mental health.

You can ask the GP to write down the information and suggestions to help you remember.

## The main things you need to know are:

1. **New information:** The GP should write down any diagnoses, test results, or other new information from this visit, or since your last visit.

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2. **Changes to treatment:** This means any new medications, as well as any changes to the dose of your medications or how often to take them. It may also include new doctors or other professionals they think you should see.

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3. **Follow up:** When should you see the GP again? Do they want you to have any blood tests or scans? How do you contact new health professionals for an appointment? If making appointments is hard for you, the GP or the receptionist may be able to book it for you and give you the information.

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The GP may need to do a physical examination of your body to check your health or to diagnose an illness or injury. The GP needs to get your consent before examining you. They should tell you which parts of your body they'll examine, why they want to examine you and what will happen during the examination. You can ask the GP any questions before giving your consent and also ask to have your support person with you during the examination.

[Read more about physical examination by a doctor.](#)

## Sensory needs

What are your sensory needs? You may already have strategies or tools that you use to manage your sensory needs.

Some of your needs may be met by asking the GP or receptionist to make changes for example, giving you a quiet area to wait. Others may be met by using strategies or tools, for example, listening to music or a podcast with headphones, using a fidget toy, wearing tinted glasses or sunglasses.

Pack items for your sensory needs. You may have already decided on sensory tools when completing the [before your appointment checklist](#).

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*“Sometimes I’ve travelled on noisy public transport, then the waiting room has a noisy TV and I get stressed. A quiet space to wait would really help me.”*

*“Being unwell can increase my challenges with sensory processing.”*

*“If a GP is wearing perfume, it’s overwhelming for me.”*



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Read the [references](#) for this resource.



Here are some sensory challenges and some strategies for managing them:

## Light

Wear a hat, tinted glasses and/or sunglasses. Ask the GP to dim the lights or switch off fluorescent lights (this may not be possible if the light's needed for medical examinations).

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## Sound

Ask the receptionist to turn off TVs and/or radios in waiting areas. Ask if any hand dryers in the bathrooms can be switched off. Wear earplugs, earmuffs, noise cancelling headphones or listen to music, or a podcast, with headphones. Either ask your support person to check you in at reception or remove your headphones to tell the receptionist that you've arrived. Take your headphones off or mute the sound when you see a GP in the waiting area so that you can hear when they call your name.

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## Temperature

Dress in layers, avoid sitting near the door or close to the air conditioner/heater.

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## Space

Ask for a private waiting area or wait in your car or outside and ask the receptionist to call or text you when the GP's ready.

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## Touch

Tell the GP if you prefer a firm or light touch during physical examinations. Ask GP to check with you before touching you.

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## Movement

Ask if there's room to move while you're waiting. For example, ask 'can I go for a walk while I'm waiting, and will you call or text me when the GP's ready?'

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## Smells

Let the receptionist know that you need a low fragrance or fragrance-free environment. Ask for a private waiting area or wait in your car or outside and ask the receptionist to call or text you when the GP's ready.

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If asking for changes is difficult you could email before the appointment to ask for the changes you need, or your support person could ask for you.

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