

Completing mental health questionnaires

The General Practitioner (GP) may give you a mental health questionnaire to fill out during your appointment.

Mental health questionnaires have a list of questions about your symptoms and your life.

Mental health questionnaires are designed to show which type/s of mental health concern/s you may have, and how much your symptoms are affecting you. The results of mental health questionnaires give GPs information that helps them decide on what to do next.

Our research with autistic women found that completing these questionnaires is often difficult. One of the main reasons was that the wording in mental health questionnaires can be confusing.

The research found that mental health questionnaires are often:

- unclear (for example, 'I tended to over-react to situations')
- hard to understand (for example, 'I felt down-hearted and blue')
- not linked with the experiences of autistic women (for example, 'would you say that food dominates your life?' or 'about how often did you feel restless or fidgety?').

Tips for completing mental health questionnaires:

- answer fully and honestly, even if this means giving a bit more detail. For example: if you are often fidgety, but this isn't associated with anxiety, say so. If you never sleep well or have always found 'simple' things to be an effort; if some symptoms are new, and some have been with you all your life, say so.
- if you don't understand the question, ask the GP to explain it using plain language.
- let the GP know if you need extra time to read and answer the questions.
- if you have communication preferences, ask the GP to change the way you receive the questions (for example, have them read to you, complete them on paper or complete them online etc).
- ask the GP if you can take the questionnaires home to complete, if that's easier for you.
- use the notes you've made before the appointment to help you answer the questions. For example notes from the [Visual signs and symptoms resource](#) and/or the [What to say to the GP worksheet](#).

- if you have a support person, ask them to help you. For example, ask them to read the questions to you.
 - If your support person knows you well, ask them about any questions you are finding it hard to answer. Sometimes another person can see things that are not obvious to you.
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See other sections of this guide or download the complete guide [here](#).