

## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR VISIT TO THE GP

To make the most of your visit to the GP it really helps if you can:

- \* Book appointments in advance.
- \* Be on time for appointments.
- \* If you have to cancel an appointment, give the surgery as much notice as you can (ideally 24 hours notice is useful). You can then re-schedule the appointment at the time you phone in.
- \* Return for follow up appointments.
- \* Tell the receptionist when booking your appointment if you think you need a longer consultation. If you want to talk to the GP about more than one problem, you may need a longer than usual consultation time.

## PAYMENT

There are two ways that a GP can be paid for their services:

1. Bulk Billing - this means that your Medicare card covers the cost of the visit. Show your Healthcare card and Medicare card to the receptionist when you arrive for your appointment.
2. Private billing - Some GP's charge a fee, most of which you can claim back from Medicare. GP's may discount their fee for some patients experiencing financial hardship or those possessing a valid Healthcare card.

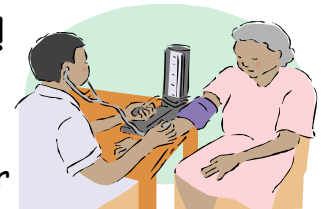
When booking your appointment ask whether the GP bulk bills or private bills and tell the receptionist that you have a health care card.



## GP'S - EVERYBODY NEEDS ONE!

### WHAT DOES A GP DO?

- \* A GP (General Practitioner) is a doctor who helps a person to look after all aspects of their health (physical and mental).
- \* A GP sees people when they are sick and also when they are healthy to help prevent sickness (check-ups).
- \* GP's may work on their own or with other GP's in a group practice. Many practices have both male and female doctors.



### WHY DO YOU NEED A GP?



- \* People living with mental illness may neglect their physical health. Prevention of physical illness can help you manage any mental health problems you have.
- \* The medications people take when they have a mental illness may lead to problems with their physical health. Going to a GP to have regular health checks can help prevent these problems before they arise, or to have treatment for them so that they don't get worse. Ideally, you should have a physical check up once a year.
- \* Having ONE GP enables you to get to know each other and this will make it easier to make the best decision about your health care and well being.

## HOW TO FIND A GP

- \* Ask family, friends, neighbours or people you know to recommend one. Word of mouth is a good way to find a GP.
- \* Call Health Direct on 1800 022 222 and ask for names of GP's in your area.
- \* Ask a health professional who you trust for the names of any mental health friendly GP's in your area.



## CONFIDENTIALITY



\* Anything you say to your GP is confidential. This means that it cannot be discussed with anyone else without your permission. The only time your GP can share information with another person without your permission is if you or someone else is in danger.

- \* All the staff at the GP surgery must follow the rules of confidentiality.
- \* Your GP and the mental health service can share information with your permission.
- \* Unless you specifically request not to, the mental health service may send a report to the GP so that he/she is informed about your treatment.

## WHAT TO THINK ABOUT WHEN CHOOSING A GP

### 1. Patient - GP communication issues:

YES NO

Do you feel comfortable with the GP - does his/her style suit you? Would you prefer a male/female GP?		
Do you think that the GP is a good listener?		
Does the GP use terms that you can understand?		
Is the GP willing to consider alternative ways of solving a problem? (e.g. diet, exercise, counselling, complementary therapies?)		

### 2. GP Practice administration issues:

Is there information about the cost of appointments and fees for specific procedures performed at the surgery? Does the surgery bulk bill?		
Is there information about the surgery's opening hours and the best way to book appointments?		
If it is a large surgery, will you see the same doctor at each visit?		
Are there arrangements made by the surgery regarding visits at home and after hours services?		
Is there a procedure for advising you of your test results?		
Do you feel that the surgery waiting room is 'user friendly'?		

### 3. GP Special interests and skills:

Do you need a GP who is mental health friendly?		
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