

How to help your GP listen to you and your child

Reassurance, insight and understanding

Before you make the appointment - Ask yourself "How will I know the time spent with the doctor has been useful? What will have happened? What action will be planned?" If you are very worried about your child and you think the problem is urgent, ring NHS Direct.

Booking the appointment

- Do you know which doctor you want to see or is it ok to see any doctor?
- Does the surgery have a priority system for seeing children?
- How long are you prepared to wait?
- If your child is under five, can you contact the health visitor and talk things through with them. Their contact number should be in your Child Development Record (red book).
- Would it be ok to talk to the practice nurse instead?
- Do you want a morning or an evening appointment?
- How long are the appointments?
- Can you book a double appointment so you don't feel rushed?
- If you think you'll have language difficulties, ask in advance for an interpreter.

Preparing for the appointment

- Make a detailed list of symptoms/behaviour and how they are affecting your child.
- When are things more difficult?
- What has changed in the last few days/weeks/month/six months?
- Are there any trigger factors you have identified?
- How much stress is this putting on the rest of the family?
- What are you most worried about?
- Is your child in any pain? Try to scale it from 1-10.
- When are the symptoms/pain/behaviour worse?
- Have you noticed anything which

helps to reduce the symptom/pain/behaviour?

- Write all this down and make two copies, one for you and one for the GP to put in your child's medical notes.
- Make a list of questions you want to ask the GP before you go to the surgery.
- Send your preparation notes and your questions to the doctor several days before your appointment and tell them you are coming to see them on a particular date and time. This gives the doctor time to chase up any test results you might be waiting for.
- Take a friend or partner with you if you need support.
- Take the name and address and contact details of your child's school with you in case the doctor wants to write to them.

During the appointment

- Ask the GP to read what you have prepared. If possible, send it to the GP before the appointment and ask them to read it in advance.
- If you are apprehensive about asking questions, give the list you have prepared to the GP to read and make sure the end of the session that they haven't forgotten to answer any of the questions. If you don't have time to go through all your questions, don't worry. Make another appointment to continue the discussion. It is better to discuss one issue to a successful conclusion than try to have all your questions answered and keep the doctor from seeing other patients.
- If you are worried about remembering what your GP has told you, ask them to write down the most important points or draw you a picture of what they have been explaining to you. You could also

ask if you can tape the consultation so that you will have it to refer to later or you can play it to your partner or other family members.

- Take notes of any instructions, names of medicines you're given and staff names. Ask for clearer explanations when you don't understand.
- Take your Child Development Record booklet with you, and ask for it to be filled in.
- Ask for written information on the problem. There may be some you can take away with you, or details of local self-help groups.
- Ask for another appointment if you have more questions to ask. How to help your GP listen to you and your child
- Ask the doctor what they are intending to do next about your child's care. Will they be referring your child to another doctor/hospital/nurse? How long will that take? When should you come back and see them again?
- Ask them what they think you could do to help your child or the situation?
- Try to remain calm and courteous at all times.

After the appointment

- Did the appointment meet all your expectations? If not, what still has to be achieved?
- If the doctor has agreed to refer your child to another doctor or agency, wait a week and then telephone the surgery in the afternoon and ask the doctor's secretary if they have typed the referral letter. If you would like a copy of the letter, ask if it can be arranged. If you do not get sent a copy letter, ask the secretary to give you the name of the person they wrote to, when it was sent and any reference on the letter. Ask them if the letter was sent as an urgent referral or a non-urgent referral.
- If you have not heard anything from the hospital after one month, telephone the secretary of the person your GP wrote to and ask them if they have received the referral letter.
- If there is no record of it, ask them to contact your surgery and ask for another copy of the letter to be faxed urgently to them.
- If they have received the referral, ask them how soon your child will be called for an appointment. If the waiting time for appointments is unacceptable, because of the severity of your child's condition, go back to your GP and tell them what is happening with your child at the moment. Ask the GP to make a note of how the situation has changed and ask them to send another letter to the consultant/department.
- If you have difficulties in accessing the service you need with either your GP surgery or the hospital, contact the Primary Care Trust Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) or the Hospital Trust PALS for help and advice.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service

To find the appropriate PALS Service go to www.pals.nhs.uk and search their database for your local hospital or Primary Care Trust. There are also PALS in the community and mental health services who are there to help and support you. They can also put you in touch with your local ICAS service.

Useful Contacts

If you require further guidance, please do not hesitate to contact:

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Talk to a specialist advisor today

Freephone **08000 23 22 33** or visit www.irwinmitchell.com
Text claim to **61993** and someone will call you back



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