NHS inform
Health information you can trust

It’s okay to ask!

Getting the most out of your health care appointments

In the NHS in Scotland we want you to play an active part in your care and treatment.

So, to help you get the most from your appointment, here are some tips and some questions you could ask.

Before your appointment

It may help if you prepare for your appointment. Here are some tips on what to do before you go.

- Make a list:
  - write down details of your symptoms – when did they start, what makes them better or worse?
  - write down your two or three most important questions
- List or bring all the medicines and pills you take – including vitamins and supplements.
- Ask a friend or family member to come with you, if you like.
- Ask your hospital or surgery for an interpreter or communication support if needed.

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Questions to ask during your appointment

It’s okay to ask questions about your health and what might be wrong.

Don’t be afraid to tell your health worker if you don’t understand what they’ve said.

Don’t feel embarrassed about asking your health worker to explain things again.

You can ask your health worker to write down and explain any words you don’t know. And it may help to write things down or ask a family member or friend to take notes.

At any time during your appointment you could say things like:

- Can I check that I’ve understood what you said?
- So, what you’re saying is?
- Can you explain it again? I still don’t understand.

You may also want to ask

About any tests

If your health worker has recommended going for tests, you may want to ask:

- What are the tests for?
- What will the tests involve?
- How should I prepare for the tests?
- How and when will I find out the test results?
- Who do I contact if I don’t get the test results?

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About any treatment

You may also have questions about what treatment, if any, is best for you, for example:

- How well does this treatment work?
- How long will I need treatment?
- How will I know if the treatment is working?
- Are there any side effects or risks?
- Are there other ways to treat my condition?
- Is there anything I can do to help myself?

About what happens next?

You may want to find out who to contact if you have further problems or questions, or if any support groups are available.

You could ask:

- What happens next – do I come back and see you?
- Who do I contact if things get worse?
- Do you have any written information?
- Where can I go to find more information, a support group or further help?

Useful checklist

Before you leave your appointment make sure:

- you understand everything that has been said
- you've covered everything on your list
- you know what should happen next – and when. Write it down.

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Ask:

- who to contact if you have further problems or questions
- for copies of letters written about you, if you want to see them. You are entitled to see them. There may be a charge for providing them.

After your appointment don't forget to:

- write down what you discussed and what should happen next, and keep your notes
- ask what's happening if you don't receive your appointment details
- ask for the results of any test. If you don't get the results when you expect – ask for them. And it's okay to ask what the results mean.

Your notes

You can use this space to write down your own notes and questions:

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For further copies of this leaflet, or if you would like this information in another language or format, please phone the NHS inform Helpline on **0800 22 44 88**. This information is also available from the following websites:

- www.nhsinform.co.uk
- www.hris.org.uk

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