

# Your GP is here to help



## How to find a GP

GPs can be found or recommended by:



family, friends, neighbours and co-workers



telephone or online directories, such as the National Health Services Directory ([www.nhsd.com.au](http://www.nhsd.com.au))



health service providers, such as pharmacists and non-GP specialists



social media and web searches.

## Choosing your GP

Your GP is a specialist doctor who can help you stay healthy, spot health problems early, and help you manage long-term health conditions.

It's important to find a GP you feel comfortable with. It's fine if you need to try a few different GPs before you decide on your usual GP.

Many GPs have special interests and skills in particular areas, such as women's health, mental health, travel health or skin cancer. Most practices have both male and female GPs. If your faith, personal preference or culture means that you need to see a GP of a particular gender, let the receptionist know.

If you move to a new area, you can have your medical notes sent to your new GP so they have a record of your history.

## How your GP can help

Your GP can help you be healthier in many ways:

### Prevention

- Help you stay well through immunisation, tests and education to help you make healthy lifestyle choices

### Treatment

- Give advice on any health problem
- Perform procedures like wound care, removing skin lesions, treating fractures
- Refer you to other specialist doctors, if needed

### Manage ongoing health conditions

- Keep conditions like asthma, heart disease or diabetes under control

### Mental health care

- Help manage conditions like depression or anxiety

### Advice for all aspects of your health

- Health assessments for work, driving or insurance
- Travel health
- Discuss sexual health, contraception, pregnancy and parenting
- Help you understand and use other health and community services

### Health history and medication

- Track your medical history, including through My Health Record
- Prescribe and monitor medications

## Benefits of having a usual GP

It is a good idea to have a usual GP.

When you have a usual GP, you will see the same doctor each time you visit. This means you can pick up where you left off at the last appointment.

It also makes it easier for you to talk to your GP about private matters. Understanding you and your family, home and lifestyle can help your GP provide a personal level of care. You will come to trust each other and can make decisions together about how to manage your health.

Studies show that people with a usual GP have better health, better quality of life, and live longer.

## Making an appointment with your GP

For most general practices, a standard consultation is around 15 minutes. If you have a lot to talk to your GP about, you can ask for a longer appointment so you don't feel rushed.

If English is not your first language, when you make your appointment you can ask the receptionist to arrange a free interpreter.

If you have any questions about payment, the receptionist can explain Medicare and fees.

## Visiting your GP

When you visit your GP:

- you can ask about any health concerns
- bring any medications you are taking
- be open and honest – everything you tell your GP is confidential
- don't be afraid to ask questions – you can ask about anything you don't understand, any risks there might be with taking medicines or undergoing tests, or about the costs of your treatment
- bring a family member or friend, if you would like them to be there
- take notes of the discussion, actions and decisions.



Patient-centred



Continuous



Comprehensive



Coordinated



High-quality



Accessible

### Disclaimer

The information set out in this publication is current at the date of first publication and is intended for use as a guide of a general nature only and may or may not be relevant to particular patients or circumstances. Nor is this publication exhaustive of the subject matter. It is no substitute for individual inquiry. Compliance with any recommendations does not guarantee discharge of the duty of care owed to patients. The RACGP and its employees and agents have no liability (including for negligence) to any users of the information contained in this publication.

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*We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands and seas on which we work and live, and pay our respects to Elders, past, present and future.*

## What you can do if you need help when your GP's practice is closed

If you experience a major health issue, such as chest pain, loss of consciousness or a serious injury, go to a hospital emergency department or call 000.

If your problem is not an emergency, you can either wait until your usual GP is available, or use after-hours GP services. Your practice can give you information about after-hours services. The information you need is often recorded on your practice's after-hours answering machine.

## Who you can see if your usual GP is away

If your GP is unavailable or on leave, you can see another GP at your practice. They can add notes about your visit to your health record so your usual GP is kept up to date.

If you visit another practice, ask them to let your usual GP know the details of your visit.

If you have been to hospital unexpectedly, try to visit your GP soon afterwards. You should let your GP know what happened so they can access your hospital notes and keep informed of your condition and progress.

## About The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners

If your doctor has 'FRACGP' after their name, this means they have trained with The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) and they have specialised in general practice.

The RACGP is Australia's largest general practice professional organisation.

The RACGP has standards that describe how to provide safe and high-quality general practice services. You can ask your practice if it meets the RACGP Standards.

The RACGP's Vision explains how general practice supports the community, and gives ideas to government about ways to improve patient care.

For more information visit [www.racgp.org.au/vision](http://www.racgp.org.au/vision)