



NHS Fife Department of Psychology

Receiving and coping with a diagnosis

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Before a diagnosis

The main things the doctor will need to understand when you go to an appointment are:

- the symptoms which have led you to seek medication attention.
- any factors relating to your past medical history which might be relevant.

Sometimes it can be helpful to keep a diary of your symptoms or to write down what you can remember in advance of your visit to ensure you don't forget at a time when you might be feeling quite anxious. After you have discussed your symptoms and medical history, your doctor may then need to carry out a physical examination to look for visible signs of the condition. There is a whole range of tests your doctor may also carry out to diagnose your condition. These might include blood tests, X-rays, urine tests, MRI scans.

It is quite common to feel stressed about your appointment. Because stress can lead to anxiety and depression, taking early action to deal with it can be really helpful and there is a lot you can do to help. For example, learning and practicing techniques for relaxation can help you manage this potentially stressful situation in a healthier way. There is more information under the mental health tab on moodcafé about stress and how to deal with it.

Writing down questions prior to going to appointments can be helpful. For some suggestions see the leaflet 'Preparing for a Hospital Appointment' in the Self Help documents section.

The process of diagnosis

For some people, the process of diagnosis can feel overwhelming and frightening. It may be a long process and come as a shock leaving you feeling confused, helpless,

frustrated and even angry. For others, it may come as a relief, especially if you had symptoms that were difficult to explain. These feelings are all perfectly natural and understandable. Despite any initial feelings, understanding your condition and the impact it might have on your life and the lives of those around you can be key to coping with a diagnosis and feeling more in control.

Recognising the emotional impact - a roller coaster of emotion

Distress is common following a diagnosis of a chronic condition. Taking in news of a new diagnosis and what it means can bring a flood of emotions. You may at times feel like you are on an emotional rollercoaster ride of highs and lows. At first, there may be fear and shock as you learn you have a chronic condition and try to come to terms with what this means. It might mean changes to the way you live your life and this can leave you feeling overwhelmed at times. Frustration, guilt, anger, denial and other emotions can quickly rise to the surface and lead to more intense feelings of stress which can make it difficult for you to move forward with your in life.

Managing stress and seeking help

Dealing with these feelings and the long-term effects of stress can have a negative impact on your physical and emotional well-being. Learning how to manage stress and tolerate uncertainty is important for all of us regardless of whether or not we have a chronic condition. It is important to remember that difficulties that come from discovering and living with a long-term condition is perfectly natural and understanding. Although your emotions might seem quite overwhelming, always keep in mind that feelings cannot hurt you. Try not to be afraid of them, but instead learn how to cope with them as this will help you feel more in control of your own life.

You may also find it helpful to read the self help document, 'Coping with Long Term Physical Health Conditions.'

Visit moodcafe.co.uk
for more helpful resources

