



NHS Fife Department of Psychology



# Preparing for a hospital appointment

Help Yourself @ [moodcafe.co.uk](http://moodcafe.co.uk)



The key to getting the most from your hospital appointment is preparation.

## **Before the appointment**

- It can be helpful to write down a list of questions and things you would like to discuss at your appointment beforehand.
- Bring your notes with you to the appointment and inform the healthcare professional how many questions you have and perhaps write down their answers.
- If you don't understand the answer then ask the healthcare professional to explain further. You can also check your understanding with the healthcare provider "So what you're saying is... "
- It may also be helpful to bring a list of medications to your appointment as it can be difficult to recall them on the day.
- It is likely that you will be given lots of information at your appointment; you may wish to make notes yourself or bring a family member or friend for support.
- Bringing a family member or friend for support can be helpful as it means another person is able to pay close attention to what is being said.
- You may want to ask your health professional if they would be happy for you to record the session on your phone. Some people find this helps them remember what's been discussed and reduces misunderstandings. It is important that you seek the consent of the health professional before recording a session.

## ***Questions you may like to ask could include?***

- What is my diagnosis?
- Will I require tests? If so, when will I get the results?
- What are the treatment options?
- Do I need to make changes to my lifestyle?
- Is there anything I can do to help manage my symptoms?

## Before leaving the appointment

- Make sure you feel satisfied that you have had the opportunity to address all the items in your notes.
- Make sure you know what will happen next.
- It can be helpful to note down the name or number of someone you can contact in case you have further questions.
- You can also ask for copies for any letters that are written about you.

## After the appointment

Attending appointments can be stressful and exhausting. It can be important to plan to do something nice or relaxing afterwards.

### ***Some ideas include:***

- Relaxation (See Related Sections on moodcafé website.)
- Meeting with a friend
- Listening to music
- Going for a nice walk
- Pamper yourself – do something you really enjoy
- Having a relaxing bath
- Treating yourself to your favourite food/magazine/film

## Seeking further support

You may wish to find out more about your diagnosis/condition or speak to others who are going through a similar experience. To find out about local support groups or information relating to specific conditions, see the moodcafé document, 'A-Z of Contacts for Physical Health Conditions.'

## **Cancelling your appointment**

If you are unable to attend your appointment, please contact the hospital in advance and they will try to arrange for a new appointment. If you don't attend your appointment and don't get in touch, you may be discharged from the service and you'll have to ask your GP for a new referral. This will mean you be placed back on the waiting list and it may be sometime before you receive another appointment.

## **What if I feel very anxious?**

If you find that hospital appointments make you feel very anxious then you might benefit from practicing some anxiety management techniques when in the waiting room or during the appointment. We would recommend reading the self help documents on Panic, Relaxation and Hyperventilation. (These can be found under the moodcafé "Mental Health" tab, in the "Anxiety & Panic Attacks" section). It is understandable to feel anxious about appointments and although it can feel tempting to avoid these, this usually leads to greater anxiety in the long run.

## **Preparing for surgery**

Getting ready to go to hospital for surgery is an anxiety provoking experience for anyone. Do discuss any concerns with your health professional and ask questions about what your surgery will involve and what to expect during your recovery. It is helpful to be as prepared as possible as this helps to reduce people's anxiety. The following NHS website has lots of very helpful information and advice about how to prepare yourself:

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/surgery/pages/preparing-for-surgery.aspx>

Visit [moodcafe.co.uk](https://moodcafe.co.uk)  
for more helpful resources

