

## Using healthcare services in the community

### He mahi tikanga oranga mo te kātoa

## What to do if you are anxious, experience long wait times, or are concerned about a service

Knowing what is available and what to expect may help you to get the best from your care.

There may be differences in processes from one community healthcare service to the next, as each service does things in its own way to support its community.

The range and nature of services may also differ depending on where you live.

If you have specific questions, we suggest you contact the community healthcare service directly.

### What is community healthcare?

These are services that are provided in the community and not in a hospital. Usually, these services are overseen by a Primary Health Organisation (PHO), and are provided through a general practice setting.

This includes services for diagnosis and treatment, referrals to specialists or hospital care, health education, counselling, testing, screening, and prevention.

Some services are also available outside a PHO, and usually these are provided by Non Government Organisations (NGOs) and individuals working in communities.

These services include home and community support, personal cares, district nursing, mental health support, and other specialist care.

Some community healthcare services may have additional costs and some may be income tested and subsidised.

If you are concerned about the cost, you should talk directly with your healthcare provider about your situation.

### If you are feeling anxious, nervous, or worried

Sometimes attending appointments can be stressful — especially when you feel unwell.

Anxiety is a regular response to stress, and it is natural to feel this way. Anxiety can often be managed with help. It is important to recognise and seek treatment as soon as possible.

If you become anxious, it is a good idea to tell someone and ask for help.

Some general practices also offer short-term counselling sessions (up to six weeks), or they can refer you to community mental health organisations who may be able to help you. It is a good idea to talk with them about your situation and to ask for help.

If you have a support person with you at an appointment, tell them how you are feeling.

If you are alone, tell a staff member and ask them to help you. They may be able to take you to another area and provide you with ways to reduce your anxiety.

## If you experience long waiting times

Sometimes community healthcare services can be busy. This means that you may have to wait some time before you are seen.

If you feel you have been waiting a long time, then talk to the service provider. They may be able to tell you how much longer you can expect to wait or arrange another appointment for you.

Some community healthcare services may also have waiting lists for services.

The service should keep in touch with you about your place on the wait list.

If you are worried about the time this is taking, you should talk with the service about this.

## If you are concerned or unhappy with a service

Sometimes, you may not get the service you were expecting.

If you feel this way, then you should tell someone about your experience so that services can improve.

- Each provider has a complaints process, so you can tell them about your concern.
- If you feel uncomfortable talking with them, or you want support to access the complaints procedure for the service, you should ask for help.
- You can have someone help you talk the matter through with the healthcare service.

If you don't want to talk with the health or disability service directly, then:

- the Nationwide Health and Disability Advocacy Service can help you to try to resolve your concerns; or
- if you would like to make a complaint about a health or disability service, you can also contact the Health and Disability Commissioner.

For further information about your rights when accessing health or disability services, or to raise your concerns about the service you received, please contact:

### The Nationwide Health & Disability Advocacy Service

- Free phone: 0800 555 050
- Email: [advocacy@advocacy.org.nz](mailto:advocacy@advocacy.org.nz)
- Website: [www.advocacy.org.nz](http://www.advocacy.org.nz)

### The Health and Disability Commissioner

- Postal address: PO BOX 1791, Auckland, 1140
- Auckland: (09) 373 1060; Wellington: (04) 494 7900
- National freephone: 0800 11 22 33
- Email: [hdc@hdc.org.nz](mailto:hdc@hdc.org.nz)
- Website: [www.hdc.org.nz](http://www.hdc.org.nz)