

Using healthcare services in the community

He mahi tikanga oranga mo te kātoa

Consultations and appointments

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.

Support needs

If you need support when you are using a community healthcare service, you are entitled to have your support needs met.

For example:

- access to a New Zealand Sign Language interpreter
- having information written down to help you understand it better
- support to access services and make decisions.

You can also ask for healthcare professionals who are the same gender as you, or to have a chaperone present for consultations and tests.

You may find it useful to have a My Health Passport booklet on hand to help with communication and to hold information about your support needs.

What to know before a consultation

Usually, general practice consultations are between 10–15 minutes long. This means usually only one concern can be covered.

If you have other concerns, you may need to book in extra time. It may be helpful to write

down your main concern and take this with you, so that the most important issues are addressed first.

It is important that you know:

- what you want to talk about and what you want to achieve from the consultation
- what you need from the healthcare professional you are seeing.

It may be useful to prepare some background information. This could include:

- family history (e.g., heart problems)
- your own recent history (e.g., headaches)
- any symptoms you have, even if you think they are not related or important.

You should think about what you want to achieve from the consultation. Do you want to:

- have tests done?
- get a prescription or referral?
- get more information?

What to know during a consultation

- You should feel comfortable with the community healthcare service, and you should feel that your concerns are being listened to.
- You can have a support person with you.
- You should be given information in a way that you can understand so that you can make an informed decision.

You should be told what you can expect to happen afterwards:

- Do you need further tests? Or a follow-up consultation?
- Are you being referred to another service?
- Will you be given a prescription for medicine? What side effects should you be aware of?
- How will you be told about any results?
- What should you do if you become more unwell or if you begin to experience new symptoms?

What to think about after a consultation

Make sure you know when any further tests (blood, urine, or other diagnostic tests), referrals (to specialists or to hospital services), or treatments (medication or surgery) are going to happen.

You should also know:

- what other actions you are expected to take
- what you can expect to happen next
- what to do if your situation changes.

If you have any questions, talk with someone at the service — they are there to help you.

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
- Website: 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
- Website: www.hdc.org.nz