

Next Steps

If you do not respond well to the medications or treatment you are receiving, your GP may refer you to a mental health specialist. If you have been referred to mental health services, your GP should still be looking after your general care needs, including physical health.

If you have a severe mental illness, you should be getting an annual physical health check by your GP. People with diagnoses of severe and enduring mental health problems are at increased risk of a range of physical illnesses and conditions. A health check may include taking your blood pressure, taking your pulse, doing a urine or blood test or checking your weight.

Getting a second opinion

If you're unhappy or want to confirm that the advice or support you were given was correct, you can ask for a second opinion from another GP or a specialist. You can also make an appointment with another GP in the practice, or change practice altogether if your GP refuses to arrange a second opinion for you. Sometimes seeing a different doctor can make all the difference.

For information on specific mental illnesses, please contact any of the following:

NAMI Flagstaff at www.namiflagstaff.org

NAMI Arizona at www.namiarizona.org

NAMI National at www.nami.org

In an emergency, call:

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
at **800-273-8255 or call 911**



TALKING TO YOUR DOCTOR

It can be daunting to speak to a physician that you may not know well, but most people find that speaking to their General Practitioner (GP) and the help and support they receive from them, can make all the difference to their lives. If you've noticed changes in the way you are **thinking** or **feeling** over the past few weeks or months that concern you or cause you distress, you should consider going to see your GP.

Symptoms of poor mental wellbeing include:

- Loss of appetite
- feeling low or constantly anxious or worrying
- thinking negative thoughts about yourself
- irritability or moodiness
- finding it harder than usual to concentrate
- not enjoying your life as much as you once did
- finding day-to-day life difficult (not feeling up to washing or eating, for example)
- trouble sleeping, or sleeping too much
- seeing or hearing things that other people do not see or hear.

Your GP can help you by:

- Asking questions that will help you understand what you are going through and what support is available.

- Offering you medications if it's appropriate
- Referring you to talk therapy or support groups
- Recommending simple lifestyle changes that can improve your mental health
- Scheduling a follow-up appointment to see how you are doing
- Referring you to a specialist if that would be helpful

Finding the best GP for you

You must be registered with a local practice to make an appt. If you don't have a GP, contact a practice in your area and ask if they have a mental health specialist available. You may ask to see a male or female GP. Also, ask how long the appt is likely to last and if you should schedule a double appt for the first interview.

You do not need to tell the receptionist why you are making an appointment. You can just say you'd prefer not to say. If you need to be seen urgently, ask how you can arrange an emergency appointment.

Preparing for your appointment

- Make a list of things you want to bring up
- Write down your symptoms and how they affect you
- Provide key information about upsetting events in your past and any current stressful events
- Make a list of your medical information, including other physical or mental conditions, the names and amounts of your current medications, and any herbal or over-the-counter supplements you are taking.

In addition, write down a list of questions to ask, such as:

- What type of mental health disorder do I have?
- How do you treat my type of mental illness?
- Will counseling or psychotherapy help?
- Are there medications that can help and what are their side effects?
- What can I do to help myself?
- Do you have any printed material about my illness?
- What websites do you recommend?

Remember, you are not alone. 30% of GP appointments are related to mental health and wellbeing issues. One in six people will experience a mental health problem each week.

During your appointment:

Your GP will ask you questions to gauge a full picture of your health, so be sure to be honest and share all the details about how you're feeling and how your symptoms are affecting you. It is always worth asking why a certain treatment is being offered, whether there are other things that could help and what you think will help you.

GPs are trained to deal with sensitive issues in a professional and supportive way, so there is no need to be embarrassed. Everything you tell them is legally confidential, unless you are a danger to yourself or others.

If you are given any medication, your GP should tell you how it is expected to help, inform you about any side effects that may occur and discuss other treatment options. If the GP has prescribed medication, there should be regularly scheduled check-ups to see if it's helping.