Maximise your healthcare appointment

Management of your MS is a team effort with you in charge.

It's time to take control and get involved in your healthcare!

It's important to discuss all health concerns with your healthcare practitioner and ensure you get heard. However some people can feel dismissed or intimidated during healthcare appointments, whilst others stay quiet, aren't sure what to say or don't want to make a 'big deal' of a health concern, even though their symptoms are troubling or getting worse.

Speaking up will ensure your needs are met and your MS is managed the way you want.

> Your GP is the first contact for any new and/or persistent symptoms. MS nurses and other healthcare advisers can also help to manage symptoms on an ongoing basis.

> Speak to your neurologist and other healthcare providers about the best approach to management of your MS for your individual circumstances.

10 strategies to help speak up and maximise your healthcare appointments.

1. **Book a long appointment.** Ensure you have adequate time to discuss your concerns but make sure to ask and understand the costs first.

2. **Be prepared.** Write a checklist of questions, medications and any prior tests. Describe how you feel, your symptoms, include any changes and when they occurred.

3. **It's ok to speak up.** Many people feel emotional and struggle to be assertive or clear about a health concern. Be open, voice your feelings and explain the impact on your daily life.

4. **Stay calm and breathe.** Take your time and refer to your notes and questions. Speak calmly and clearly. Explain how you're feeling and discuss what's best for you.

5. **Clarify your expectations.** What would you like from the consultation? Write it down in advance. Being certain will help get the outcome you want from the appointment.

6. **If you don't understand something ask your GP to repeat or rephrase it.** At the end of the appointment ask for a run through of key points again.

7. **Expect your GP...** To examine your neurological system and discuss any findings and how they relate to any other health conditions you might have.

8. **Ask your GP...** What sort of investigations or specialist referrals could assist in addressing your concerns and the likely cost.

9. **Understand the next steps.** Ask how the process works and what you need to do for each matter raised. Get info to read at home about being a patient, tests, results and/or diagnosis.

10. **Seek clarification and/or a second opinion.** If you don't feel your concerns have been addressed, it's ok to re-state questions. You may wish to seek a second opinion.

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Interpreter services

If English is your second language, you may need interpreter support for your healthcare visit.

- The free Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) helps people access services and information around Australia.
- TIS National interpreters represent more than 160 languages
- Call **131 450**

There is other support available to help you manage your MS

- **Contact your state/territory MS organisation** (details below) to access services such as MS nurses, peer support and other resources.
- For information about MS and MS treatments visit: **www.msaustralia.org.au**

MS Limited
(Victoria, NSW, ACT and Tasmania)
1800 042 138
msconnect@ms.org.au
www.ms.org.au

MSWA
(Western Australia)
1300 097 989
communications@mswa.org.au
www.mswa.org.au

MS Society SA & NT
(South Australia and Northern Territory)
1800 812 311
msassist@ms.asn.au
www.ms.asn.au

MS Queensland
1800 177 591
info@msqld.org.au
www.msqld.org.au

About MS Australia

MS Australia (MSA) is the national peak body for people living with MS in Australia. Our role is to work on behalf of all state and territory based member organisations to provide a voice for people living with multiple sclerosis across the country to support the development of:

- Research
- Advocacy and awareness
- Communication and information
- Services provided by our member organisations
- International collaboration.

MSA advocates across all stakeholders, governments and communities, on behalf of our members, to represent people who are diagnosed with the disease, their carers and the broader MS community.

MSA works closely with partner organisation, MS Research Australia – the largest not-for-profit funder and coordinator of MS research in Australia.

For information about Multiple Sclerosis and MS Australia:
www.msaustralia.org.au

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