

## What to Expect at Your Appointment

You're heading to your appointment with your child and your GP! That's great news. You're on your way to getting the help, resources and support both you and your child need.

We can't speak for all GP appointments, as everyone's experience will be different, but for the most part, here's what you can expect at this initial appointment.

- 1) If you indicated that the appointment for your child is about their mental health, you will most likely be greeted with a survey/questionnaire upon arrival. The survey may be for you to fill out, for your child to fill out or one for each of you to fill out. Be as open and honest as you possibly can with the paperwork as this is one of the first steps to getting the help you and your child need.
  - a. Parent tip #1: This paperwork can be a little intimidating for your child, so be sure that you've let them know that it may come and they may need to answer some questions on paper once at the doctor's office. Preparation is key.
  - b. Parent tip #2: Feel free to compare answers once you're done - it's interesting for your child to see things through your eyes and it's also interesting for you to see your child's responses and how they feel in certain situations.
2. Most likely, both you and your child will be brought in to speak with the doctor at first. Let the doctor lead the discussion. Answer all questions as honestly as possible and be open with both your child and the doctor.
3. Expect emotions. Whether from you or from your child, emotions will most likely come. Watching your child struggle for as long as you have, or having genuine concern for the health of your child is emotional. Allow your emotions to be seen by your doctor but try to remain calm and focused on your child.
4. Remember to refer to your list of questions. Sometimes we can get caught up in the moment and forget to answer some of the questions you have. Refer to your question list and get the answers you need for every single question you have on your list. Do not leave until every question is answered.

5. The doctor will most likely speak directly to your child, your job is to sit quietly, support and not interrupt at this time. It may be difficult to wait for your child to find the right words to answer the doctor's question, but it's important to let them speak their own mind.
6. The doctor will most likely ask about sleep habits, nutrition, use of electronic devices, physical activity, etc. The goal is to get an overview of your child's mental health - there are certain things you and your child can be doing to ensure your child's mental health is as positive as possible as you learn more about diagnosing any illness they may have.
7. You may be asked to leave the room for a few minutes so the doctor can speak with your child alone. If your child is okay with this, we recommend that you do leave. It will be difficult to leave that room, but you need to trust your doctor and give your child space to say things they may not be able to say in front of you. Some children will refuse to be left alone, in which case, the doctor will most likely agree to have you stay.
8. Your doctor may bring up medicating your child. Prior to this appointment, you should check in with yourself and see how you feel about medicating for mental illness. Are you open to medication? Do you have an opinion about it? What are your concerns? Do you want to wait to medicate until after your child has spoken with a paediatric psychiatrist? Be prepared for this conversation as best you can and try to be as open to recommendations and reasoning as you possibly can.

**Parent Tip:** If your child is old enough, discuss the option of medication to help them manage their mental health prior to your visit with your GP. It is important to know how your child feels about medication prior to this appointment.