

Self-help series fact sheet 10

Managing medical appointments

Doctors and other healthcare people are important allies in our effort to live well with our illness. They can help with:

1. establishing a diagnosis/diagnoses
2. treating your symptoms
3. treating your other conditions
4. providing primary care and preventative care

Given the complexity of chronic illness and the likelihood of having several medical problems, you may well want to assemble a group of providers to help you live better with your illness. Your healthcare team may include any of the following:

- GP
- specialists ie. gastroenterologist, rheumatologist etc
- allied health such as physiotherapists
- psychologists/counsellors
- support workers such as cleaners and gardeners
- massage/yoga/tai chi
- pain management clinic
- exercise professionals such as exercise physiologist



Sometimes your healthcare can be better coordinated if your various health professionals talk to each other directly, but you need to give them your permission first.

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Partnering for better health

Information given in this fact sheet is intended as a guide only and some advice may not be relevant to your particular circumstance. These are only suggestions and your undertaking of these should be done at your own physical level or ability.

Allowing all the members of your healthcare team to share information about your care helps them to gain a more holistic view of you and your healthcare needs. It can help you to:

- avoid having to repeat health information for each practitioner
- avoid having to re-take medical tests, such as scans and blood tests
- understand which healthcare professional to ask about which problem.

To help coordinate your health information among the members of your healthcare team:

- Give consent for all the members of your healthcare team to share information about your care.
- Appoint one healthcare professional, usually your local doctor, to oversee all your care (including drawing up a treatment plan, which can be shared). This will help you and your doctor track your care and find problems more easily.
- Write down your health professionals' names and what they do in your care. Give each of them a copy of this information.
- Ask the other members of your healthcare team to tell your primary doctor about tests, medicines, treatments, physical therapy or food limitations they have suggested or prescribed.
- Ask each member of your team questions about your care and keep notes on the answers in a notebook. Take this notebook to all appointments for easy reference.

During this series of fact sheets there will be a number of these tips and tricks but if you would like further information on a particular subject please feel free to contact us by emailing info@arthritisact.org.au and we will send you further information and a list of support activities.