

General Practitioners (GPs)

Everyone should have a local doctor (also called a GP). They are a good person to contact first if you start to feel unwell, have some questions about your health or need someone to talk to. GP's are often easier to get in to see than a specialist and they deal with many different health issues. A good GP will look at your overall health (physical and mental), not just one specific area. If your GP does not have all the answers for you they will refer you to an appropriate person, such as a medical specialist, counsellor or dietician.

It is helpful to have a GP lined up before you get sick and really need them. They are especially important when you have a chronic illness. People often visit their GP more than once a year and form a good relationship with them.

If you do not have a GP, it is important that you find one as soon as possible.

Choosing a GP is a personal thing. A good GP is someone you feel comfortable talking to, knowing they are listening to what you are saying and are 'taking you seriously'. It is a good idea to shop around for a GP you 'click with'. Try asking family and friends that live near you if they can recommend a good GP.

Most GP appointments are between 1-15 minutes long. If you think you will need longer, ask the receptionist to book you in for a longer appointment time.

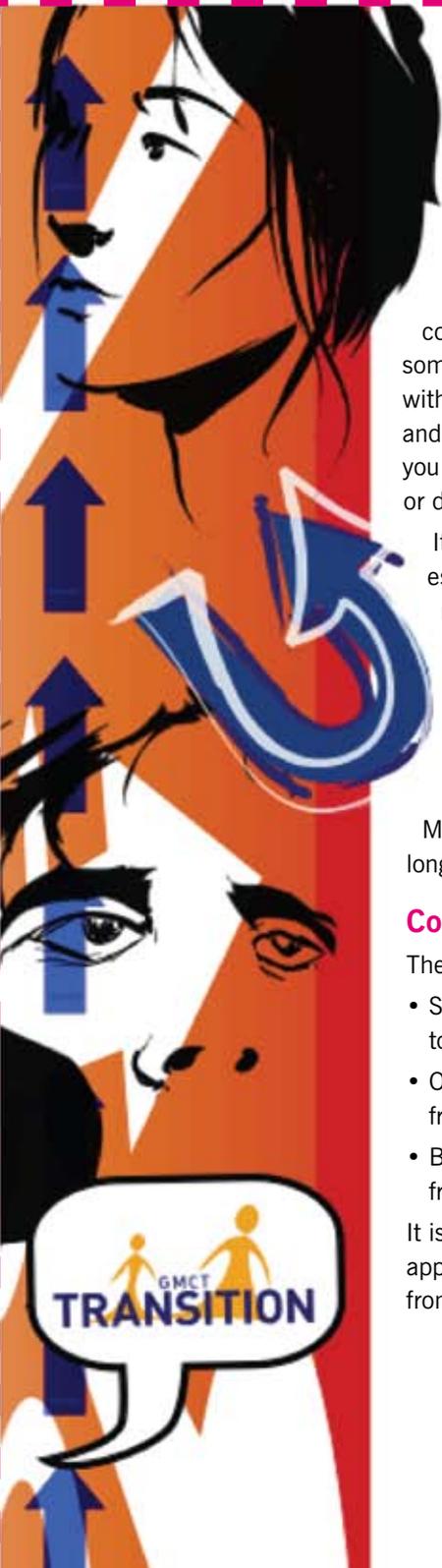
Cost of seeing a General Practitioner

The cost of seeing a GP does vary (but it is cheaper than seeing a specialist).

- Some GP's 'bulk bill' which means they charge Medicare instead of getting you to pay the bill directly (which means you pay nothing).
- Other GP's may ask you to pay the bill. You can then claim this money back from Medicare.
- Be careful though, some GP's charge more than what you can get back from Medicare.

It is always a good idea to ask the receptionist, when you ring up to make an appointment, how much your appointment will cost, how much you get back from Medicare or if they will 'bulk bill'.

For more information see the fact sheets
"Hints for Finding the Right Doctor for You"
and
"Financial Issues in the Adult World"



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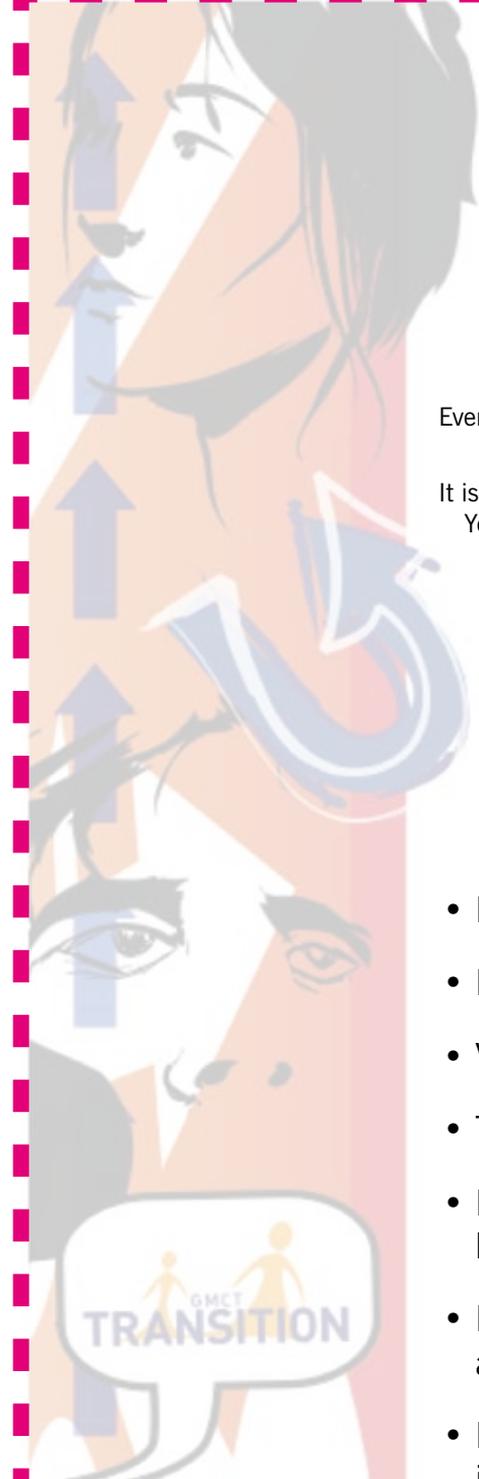
Hints for finding the right doctor for you

Everyone is different. Some people you 'click with', some you don't!

It is the same with doctors or other health care professionals.
You need to find the right one for you.

The right doctor/health professional for you should:

- Be someone you can talk to about difficult topics (such as sex and body changes)
 - Make you feel that you are being listened to
 - Make you feel comfortable
 - Value your opinion
 - Talk and/or act on your concerns
 - Be someone you can ask questions of and know you will get an honest answer
 - Not mind you asking about their background and experience
 - Encourage you to get a second opinion if you want one
 - Discuss options with you
 - Make you feel they are in control of your treatment with you as their partner
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