

# How to get the best out of your meeting with the NHS

## Language

Before the meeting, it is useful to [write down what you want to say](#). Keep your sentences clear and concise.

During the meeting, use simple and clear language. Repeat yourself if needed and refer to your notes.

It is important to be respectful and assertive. Some useful phrases include: 'please support me' or 'this isn't clear, can you help me understand?'

## Symptoms

Before the meeting, make [a list of symptoms](#) or details of your experience. Start with the symptom that impacts you the most and work your way down. See an example below:

- pain in knee, level 5 goes to level 10
- no sleep
- lack of daily functioning
- side effects to medication: skin discolouring, odd odour

Only you feel what you are feeling and can communicate what your body is going through, so it's important to present your experience fully. This will help the medical professional to assess and giving the next best steps.

## Notes and documentation

Before the meeting, consider if there is any relevant documentation you need to bring. For example, a letter from your employer confirming the impact on your work.

During the meeting, take some brief notes. Explain to the person you're meeting with that this is to help you remember what was said. Get a notebook specifically for your visits.

## Support

Having support is important.

[Take someone with you to your meeting if you can](#). This person could be a friend or advocate. If you have difficulty processing information, you can ask this person to take notes for you.

After the appointment, arrange a call with a friend to talk about how you are feeling.

You can also call Samaritans (116 123) or Breathing Space (0800 83 85 87). These are services where you are safe to speak honestly about your experience and release your emotions.

## Emotions

It can be challenging to control your emotions. However, remaining calm during a meeting will help you focus on a plan forward.

If you become upset, take a moment to breathe. Refer to the notes you have made.

After the meeting, set aside time to process your feelings and the outcome of the meeting. Talk with a friend or call Samaritans (116 123) or Breathing Space (0800 83 85 87).

### **Roles and responsibilities**

It is important to remember the roles and responsibilities of those involved.

As the patient, medical staff are unable to fulfil their role without you. They need you to give them valuable information so they can assess, support and treat you to the best of their ability.

It is also important to remember the roles and responsibilities of the medical staff you are meeting with. For example, you can ask a nurse to signpost or refer you to another service.

The responsibilities of medical staff may impact their behaviour. For example, a consultant needs to concentrate and listen attentively. They may seem unfriendly because of this. However, they are working within a limited timeframe to assess the best care for you.

It's okay to not like the method or approach of medical staff you meet. You can request a change in medical staff if you feel attending appointments with them has become too challenging.

### **Knowledge**

It can be helpful to build your knowledge of the medical site you are visiting. You can look on their website to see what services they offer, such as support groups.

It may also be useful to keep track of the medical staff you are meeting with and their wider role.

Knowing your body and matching it with the symptoms and levels within the NHS is valuable and can build a good relationship with your team. During your meeting, tell them you want to learn more and ask them for resources.