

What to Expect at Your First Psychiatric Appointment

Your first psychiatric appointment is an important step in understanding your mental health and planning appropriate care. This leaflet explains what usually happens during the initial consultation and how you can prepare.

Purpose of the First Appointment

The first appointment is primarily an **assessment consultation**. Its purpose is to develop a clear understanding of:

- Your current symptoms and concerns
- Relevant personal, medical, and mental health history
- How your mental health is affecting your daily functioning
- Any risks that may require attention
- Previous treatments and what has or has not been helpful

This appointment helps determine **whether psychiatric treatment is indicated**, and if so, what approach may be most appropriate.

What Will Be Discussed

During the appointment, the psychiatrist may ask about:

- Your current difficulties and how long they have been present
- Mood, anxiety, sleep, concentration, and stress levels
- Past mental health treatment and medications
- Medical conditions and current medications
- Alcohol or substance use
- Work, relationships, and daily functioning
- Relevant life events or stressors

Some questions may feel personal. They are asked to ensure a **thorough and safe assessment**.

Length and Structure of the Appointment

Initial appointments are typically **longer than follow-up visits**, as time is needed to gather detailed information.

The consultation usually includes:

- A structured clinical interview
- Discussion of initial impressions
- Explanation of possible next steps

In many cases, further information or time is required before final conclusions are reached.

Diagnosis and Treatment Decisions

You may not receive:

- A confirmed diagnosis, or
- A prescription for medication

at the first appointment.

Psychiatric diagnosis and treatment planning often require **careful consideration over time**, particularly where symptoms overlap or information is incomplete.

Where appropriate, the psychiatrist will discuss:

- Possible diagnoses
 - Treatment options
 - The role of medication and/or other interventions
 - The need for further assessment or follow-up
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Medications

If medication is considered:

- The potential benefits and risks will be discussed
- Alternatives may be considered
- You will have the opportunity to ask questions

Medication is not always required, and it is not prescribed automatically.

Information from Other Sources

With your consent, information may be requested from:

- Your GP
- Previous treating clinicians
- Relevant reports or records

This helps ensure treatment decisions are based on **accurate and comprehensive information**.

How to Prepare for Your Appointment

To help your appointment run smoothly, consider:

- Bringing a list of current medications
- Bringing relevant medical or mental health reports
- Thinking about your main concerns and goals
- Arriving on time

If you are unsure what to bring, clinic staff can assist.

After the Appointment

After the initial appointment:

- A plan for follow-up may be discussed
- Communication with your GP may occur
- Further appointments may be scheduled if appropriate

Progress is often reviewed and adjusted over subsequent visits.

Emergencies and Urgent Concerns

This practice does **not** provide emergency care.

If you feel unsafe or require urgent assistance at any time:

- Contact emergency services, or
 - Attend your nearest emergency department, or
 - Use appropriate crisis support services listed on our website.
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