

12 practical ways to make the most of your GP

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Write down what your GP tells you. Your GP may suggest things you need to do or refer you to other agencies. If you write things down you will remember later which will help you to take any action necessary and pass on relevant information to your HIV clinician.

10

Be ready to ask questions. If something is unclear, you don't understand or when you are unsure ask for clarification. Don't hold back – it's your health. Get the information you need.

11

Get answers if a General Practice refuses to register you. If you are denied registration, always ask to know the reason why, this will not only give you an explanation, but it will also help you if you need to take any further action. A GP in your catchment area

cannot refuse to take you onto their register. If they do you should contact your local PALS www.pals.nhs.uk or Positively UK on 0207 713 0444 who will help take your complaint forward.

12

If you are not happy with your current GP you can make a complaint and/or change. If you need support to make a complaint you can do it with the support of your local PALS (Patients, Advice and Liaison Service) www.pals.nhs.uk or call Positively UK on 0207 713 0444

Useful contacts

PALS Kensington and Chelsea

Patient Advice & Liaison Service

The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust

Ground Floor

Wallace Wing

Fulham Road

Chelsea

London SW3 6JJ

Tel: 0800 783 7176

PALS Hammersmith and Fulham

Patient Advice & Liaison Service

Hammersmith and Fulham PCT

Parsons Green Centre

5-7, Parsons Green

Parsons Green

London SW4 6UL

PALS Central & North West London NHS Foundation Trust Headquarters

2nd Floor

Greater London House

Hampstead Road

Camden

London N1 7QY

Making a difference in HIV

POSITIVELY UK

Positively UK

345 City Road

London EC1V 1LR

Tel: 020 7713 0444

Email: info@positivelyuk.org

Web: www.positivelyuk.org

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1

Know how to find your GP. You must register with a local GP – one in your catchment area. To find a local GP visit NHS Choices at www.nhs.co.uk and search for a GP by your postcode - you should have a choice of two or three. Or you can ask your HIV clinic to help you find one.

2

Ask about out of hours appointments. If you work full time, find out if your GP practice opens evenings or on Saturdays and book appointments to suit you.

3

Ask to see the same GP every time if you want. Although you may need to wait a bit longer, if there is a GP you feel more comfortable with in your surgery you can ask to see them for all your appointments.

4

Plan what you want to say to your GP. Take time to think about what you want to know before you go and write it down. Remember that often a consultation lasts less than 10 minutes.

5

Disclose your HIV status to your GP. A GP is a doctor, and will be better able to look after your health if he or she knows all the facts. This includes your HIV status. If you don't disclose there is a risk a GP may prescribe a medication that could interact badly with your HIV treatments or vice versa.

6

Remember GPs and practice staff, including receptionists and practice nurses, are bound by a confidentiality agreement; they cannot disclose your HIV status. Telling a GP can seem like a big step; if you need to, talk it over with someone first, call a friend, support worker, or a peer mentor at Positively UK.

7

Know the names of the medications you are taking. This includes not only your HIV medications, but anything else you may be taking for other health problems. You can also write this list in your note book.

8

Talk to your GP and explain your situation. If a GP is going to look after your health effectively, they need to know a bit about you. Don't get annoyed if they ask questions that you've told a previous GP, especially if it's a GP you haven't seen before.