



Expert Parent Top Tips For Health Appointments

Appointment Checklist

Being proactively involved and working in partnership with those providing health services to your child will inevitably develop your confidence, enable better outcomes for your child and give you a sense of control and understanding of how the system is working for your family.

1. Try and ensure the practitioner has had sight of any plan, profile or passport that will help them to understand who your child is in a wider context. A simple single page with some photographs and personal information about them can really make a difference.
2. Prepare any questions you want to ask to take with you (you could send this to the practitioner beforehand)
3. Prepare and share any evidence that might be useful to share with the practitioner. e.g food/ seizure/ reflux diaries, video of child or young person evidencing area of concern (this could be done on your mobile). Clinical decisions will be made easier in light of visual evidence which does not often present in clinics.
4. Consider finding someone to accompany you to the appointment. Spend time before hand going through your concerns so they can support or remind you to address those issues in the clinic/ appointment.
5. Ask how much time you will have when the appointment is made. If you feel this is too short ask for a double appointment. You can re check how much time you have when you go into the appointment to make sure you can prioritise the time you have.

6. If you feel it inappropriate to ask these questions in the presence of your child ask for an additional appointment just for you. Alternatively take someone with you and ask them to sit with your child while you have some time with the professional or ask if there is a member of staff who can do this.
7. Think through what you would like as an outcome of the appointment and share that with the practitioner early on in the appointment. (i.e. What I really want to try and address today is's anxiety and how we can support them through this)
Ask to be copied in to all correspondence and give the practitioner a list of the other professionals involved with your child if you would like them to be copied in as well. Make sure the hospital and community services have your GP's name and address. Ask hospital staff/community therapists to send a copy of the clinic letters or reports to your GP. Often, GPs **do not** routinely receive these letters (especially if your child receives medical care/therapy through their school).
8. Support your child or young person to be as prepared and involved in the appointment as possible if they wish to be and it is appropriate, encourage direct communication between them and the practitioner, taking along a photo, drawing or poem they've written can really get practitioners to engage on a more personal level (and get some decorations to make their clinic more interesting!)
9. Having an up-to-date list of medication with doses is really important if attending A&E. If it's the middle of the night and a child is admitted, you need to make sure they will get their usual meds and doses rather than relying on clinical staff to look them up (this is particularly important if a child is on an unusual medicine or unusual dose).
10. If a child has to have an elective investigation eg. MRI scan or in-patient admission, consider requesting a visit beforehand. Certainly in some hospitals, this type of service is available to adults with learning disabilities. In my opinion, it should be considered a reasonable adjustment. There may be other adjustments which could be made by staff in preparation to improve an experience. For example, I have even heard of instances where, for example, pink sheets on the bed were used for one lady with learning disabilities to make her feel less anxious!!

NB: The above tips will help you have greater confidence when working with professionals and be able to be more assertive. Remember that your aim is still to achieve the best outcome for your child and that maximising the productive relationship you have with the relevant professionals is the best way to do this. We all need positive feedback and appreciation and professionals are no different in this respect. Find opportunities to praise or congratulate the professional on what they have done, on the usefulness of a suggestion they have made. If you feel it deserving take the time to thank them for their time, effort and understanding. This will go a long way towards forging a positive relationship which, ultimately, will benefit all concerned.