

How the NHS works for young people

For parents and carers...

1 When can my child make their own health decisions?

- **Before 18 years old** if their healthcare professional feels that they have a good understanding of the situation (competence)

2 When can they make their own appointment?

- They can make an appointment with a GP **at any age**
- From 16 they can access GP online services, where they can book & cancel appointments, see test results and order repeat medications
- From 16 years, young people need to agree (consent) that their parents can make, change or cancel their appointments

3 When can they see a healthcare professional (doctor/nurse) on their own?

- **At any age**
- Everything they tell a healthcare professional should stay confidential unless they give permission or their safety is at risk
- They should be told before any information is shared

4 Can they see a doctor/visit a clinic without their parent/carer being told?

- **Yes.** If they don't want their parent/carer to know about a visit, this information should be kept private
- Healthcare professionals will encourage young people to speak to their parents or guardian, if they think it is safe to do so
- If a healthcare professional is concerned about the young person's safety, they may share information with other professionals

5 When can they use a pharmacy on their own?

- From **16 years old** young people can collect their own prescriptions and can buy over the counter medications
- Under 16 years they can sometimes collect prescriptions from a pharmacy depending on the specific situation

6 Can parents still help young people after the age of 16 (e.g. to book or accompany them to appointments)?

- Yes, **from 16 it's the young person's choice** how much their parents/carers are involved

More tips for parents and carers...

- Where possible, help prepare your child to make independent decisions about their healthcare with your support and guidance before they become an adult
- Encourage your child to attend part of their appointment on their own, until you're both comfortable and confident that they can go it alone. You can always wait outside to be close by
- Prepare questions before an appointment if you are not going with your child, share what you feel is important and what you want answers to
- Being involved in your child's healthcare is just as important as helping them to be independent when accessing healthcare as they grow up
- Some young people find it helpful to write down concerns and questions, or make a diary of their symptoms, to take to their appointment
- If your child is unhappy with the care they have received, it is important that they share their feedback (find out [how to feedback](#))
- Encourage your child to keep the contact details for their GP, school nurse and other healthcare professionals and a reminder of their appointments on their phone
- If there is not enough time to cover all of the questions your child or you had in one appointment ask about booking a follow up appointment

As a parent, can you share an example of when healthcare has worked well for you and your child?

"It's great when a healthcare professional asks my child the questions about their symptoms and not me as the parent."

"Our doctor always makes sure to include my daughter decisions being made and if she was happy and fully understood them."

Parent, West London