

# Supporting you with your gynae health GP appointments



Speaking to a healthcare professional about a gynae concern can feel daunting for some people. But, remember that the nurse or GP that you speak to is there to support you with your gynaecological health.

To help you feel confident in your appointment and get all the information you need, we've created a helpful guide which will prepare you for before, during and after your visit.

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**So, you have noticed a change in what's normal for your gynae health and have decided to make an appointment with your GP.** But what do you need to do, and how can you make the most of the appointment and arrive feeling confident?

**Follow our top tips below!**

## Booking your appointment



If you are **booking an appointment over the phone**, ask the receptionist which doctor is best to talk to about gynae symptoms; there may be a doctor at the practice who specialises in women's or gynaecological health.



If you have a strong preference, **you can request for your appointment to be with a female healthcare provider**, but please be aware that this may not always be possible. However, all healthcare professionals will be trained to support people who may be nervous and will be knowledgeable in managing gynae concerns.

## Before your appointment



Your appointment time may be relatively short, so it's a good idea to **think about the most important things** you want to cover before you go in.

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Some appointments will be over the phone, so **try and find a quiet place** or, if you prefer to, ask if it's possible for the appointment to be in person.

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**Write down your gynae symptoms**, including: what they are; when they began; how they are affecting you/your life; what makes them better or worse; any patterns; and how they have changed over time. If you have been keeping a diary of symptoms, take this with you to show your GP. There is a variety of health and menstrual apps that can help track symptoms for people who have a smartphone.

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In gynae appointments, **GPs and nurses often ask about your menstrual cycle** – when was your last period; how long does your period normally last; how heavy is the flow; how regular is it; how long is the interval between periods; do you usually experience pain or other menstrual symptoms, etc. Consider making some notes around this to take with you.

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**Write down anything you have already tried to help with your symptoms** e.g., any medications, including things you have been prescribed or bought over the counter.

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**Make a list of any questions you may want to ask.**

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Depending on what gynae symptoms you have, your healthcare professional may need to conduct a physical examination. Should this be the case, **you are entitled to have a chaperone** (a trained person who accompanies and looks after another person) to accompany you, if that would make you feel more comfortable. **Speak to the receptionist about a chaperone when you arrive at your appointment.**

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You may also like to **wear loose clothing for an appointment** that might involve a physical examination as it can make preparing for the examination more comfortable.

## During your appointment



Though they may not be able to join you in the consultation room, **you are welcome to bring a family member or friend with you** (note: this may be subject to Covid restrictions depending on your GP surgery's policy).



**Be honest with your GP** about your concern. If it helps you, show your GP what you have written down in preparation for the appointment.



Depending on what symptoms you have, **you could need a physical examination**. Physical examinations may involve your GP feeling your tummy or giving you an vaginal (internal) or vulval (your external genitals you can see between your legs) examination. Examinations can be very helpful to enable your healthcare provider to make a diagnosis. However, if you have concerns about the examination, you should raise these with your healthcare provider on the day. They will work through your concerns with you and talk you through the procedure to **put your mind at ease**.



Your nurse or doctor won't offer you an **internal or external examination** unless they think it will help them to help you. However, if you don't feel you are able to go through with an examination, then **you have the right to refuse it**. You will never be forced, and it might be that you need to have more than one appointment with the nurse or doctor in order to build up to being examined.



Do not be afraid to ask if you do not understand any words or terminologies. Your GP or nurse will be happy to explain what they mean and **you can (and should) ask as many questions as you like**.



At times, appointments can feel like a bit of a blur and you can leave forgetting what was discussed. It's a good idea to **take some notes** that you can refer back to afterwards. You might like to take a **pen and paper** with you, **or take notes on your phone**.

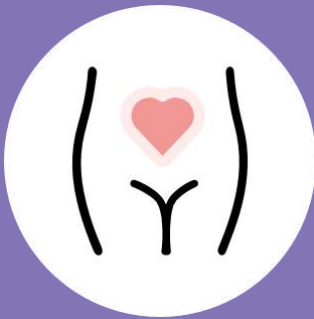
## During your appointment

Before you leave your appointment, make sure you check:

- ☐ Whether you have covered / asked all the questions you want to
- ☐ If you have understood everything – if not, ask again
- ☐ If you know what should happen next and when
- ☐ Does your GP want to see / speak to you again and if so, when?
- ☐ What you need to do if your symptoms don't improve or worsen

And make sure you know:

- ☐ Who to contact if you have any more problems or questions
- ☐ Where you can go to find further information about your condition if you need it



You know your body best, so if you feel your GP hasn't properly understood your symptoms, don't be afraid to assert yourself. Sometimes women and people with gynae organs feel they have not been properly listened to. While efforts are now being made to improve this, if you feel your symptoms might be indicating something more serious, do discuss it with your GP.

## After your appointment



Consider booking another appointment to see your GP if your symptoms continue, worsen, or your GP has asked to see you again.



Don't be afraid to **ask for a second opinion** if you don't feel you have received the help you needed / wanted - ask to speak to someone else at your next appointment

Keep a diary of any continuing symptoms, noting when they occur, how frequently, and how painful / inconvenient they are. This will be helpful to refer back to during any follow up appointments.

### Some symptoms you might experience are:



Abnormal bleeding: in between your regular periods, during or after sex and after the menopause



Skin changes (lumps, lesions, colour, texture, rashes, patches)



Pelvic / abdominal pain that isn't menstrual cramps



Persistent bloating (that doesn't come and go)



Menstrual cycle changes (e.g. length, volume of blood, cramps)



Change in bowel / urine habits



An itch / lump in the vagina (internal)



Pain during sex



Blood-stained (red, pink, brown) or unpleasant smelling discharge



Itching, pain, swelling or soreness of the vulva

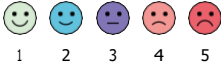
## Things to discuss and ask

## Notes from my appointment

# My symptomdiary

Pain  
level?

Try using the 1–5 scale  
below to help you  
track your pain level



1 2 3 4 5



Inconvenient  
symptoms?

How  
frequent?



How heavy  
is your flow?



What makes  
it better?



What makes  
it worse?

Has any  
medication  
helped today?

Date: / /



Date: / /



Date: / /



Date: / /



Date: / /



Date: / /



Date: / /



Date: / /



Date: / /



## Things to remember for future appointments

Appointment  
dates





GYNAECOLOGICAL HEALTH AWARENESS

# Make sure you continue to Be Gynae Aware.

For more information, visit:

**[www.eveappeal.org.uk/begynaeaware](http://www.eveappeal.org.uk/begynaeaware)**

The Eve Appeal also runs a free and confidential nurse-led information service, Ask Eve, you can get in touch with any questions or concerns about your gynae health on: **[nurse@eveappeal.org.uk](mailto:nurse@eveappeal.org.uk)** or **0808 802 0019**