

## **Patient Information: A Guide to Health Assessments for Older Persons**

### **What are health assessments?**

Health assessments provide the opportunity for your GP to undertake an in-depth assessment of your health. The assessment will cover medical, physical, psychological and social aspects of health.

### **Who can have one?**

All people aged 75 years and over, or 55 years or over for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who are living in the community or in hostel level aged care accommodation.

### **Why is the doctor suggesting a health assessment for you?**

Your doctor is offering you a health assessment to assist you to maintain good health. It also allows your doctor to take specific notice of areas which are hard to cover in a normal consultation, such as nutrition. A health assessment also provides you an opportunity to raise any concerns that you may have about your health, such as hearing difficulties or sleeping problems.

### **Does having a health assessment mean there is something wrong with me?**

Not at all. A health assessment helps your doctor assess your overall level of health in order to provide advice aimed at preventing ill health in the future. Your doctor will be offering a health assessment to many other patients who regularly attend the practice. However, if you are worried about the health assessment, please talk to your doctor or staff in the practice about your concerns.

### **What happens during a health assessment?**

Your doctor will discuss the health assessment with you and ask you for your permission before proceeding with it. This is a good opportunity for you to ask any questions.

Your doctor (or another health professional acting under their guidance) will check on a number of areas:

- your recent health;
- whether or not you have seen other doctors or health workers in the last six months;
- any difficulties with mood, memory or sleep;
- smoking/alcohol/nutrition/exercise;
- living arrangements and home safety;
- social support;
- mobility;

- the medications you take;
- immunisations; and
- an examination of your weight, height, blood pressure, pulse, feet, vision, hearing and other areas which may come up during the assessment.

### **Where and when is the health assessment conducted?**

A health assessment can be conducted in the practice, or in your home, or a combination of both. Because a health assessment tries to give your doctor a complete picture of your health, your doctor may ask about visiting you at home. If you have any worries about this, please tell your doctor.

Usually a health assessment is repeated in one year's time.

### **Who conducts the health assessment?**

Some parts of the health assessment may be undertaken by another professional, for example, a nurse or occupational therapist. The whole assessment, however, will be under the guidance of your doctor. *Because this is an in-depth assessment of your health, it is important that you attend your usual doctor.* At the end of the assessment your doctor will discuss their findings and recommendations with you. If you would like a carer, another family member, or someone else to be present for any part of the health assessment, please tell your doctor beforehand.

### **Are there any costs?**

Medicare pays a rebate for health assessments. Ask your doctor about any fees involved.

### **How long will it take?**

The health assessment usually takes between 60 and 90 minutes in total, but this may spread over more than one visit.

### **How will I find out the results?**

Your doctor will discuss the results and recommendations with you and give you a written summary. You may need to make a separate appointment for this.

**Ask your doctor if you have any questions about health assessments**

## Patient Information: A Guide to Care Plans for People with Chronic Medical Conditions

### What are care plans?

Care plans are comprehensive plans for the care of patients with chronic conditions who need care from their doctor and at least two other health workers or care providers. Care plans provide the opportunity for all the providers involved in caring for you to plan your care in a coordinated fashion in consultation with you.

### Who would benefit from a care plan?

Anyone who has a condition that lasts longer than six months (for example, diabetes, arthritis, intellectual disability or asthma), and needs the care of their GP and at least two other health workers or care providers (for example a physiotherapist, medical specialist, community nurse or other community care provider). People who require palliative care services, and people with chronic problems being discharged from hospital, may also benefit. There are no age restrictions. Even young children or teenagers can benefit from their GP planning care with other health care providers.

### Who prepares the care plan?

Your doctor or one of the other health or care providers involved in caring for you will prepare the care plan with your assistance. Sometimes your doctor will be in charge of organising the care plan. At other times your doctor will be contributing to a care plan that someone else has organised. An example of this is planning for return home after a period in hospital.

### What happens when your doctor organises a care plan with you?

With your help, your doctor will first assess your current health and your health care needs. Your medical, physical, psychological and social needs will be considered.

Together you will decide:

- what your health care problems and needs are;
- what result you would like from the care plan; and
- what other health care and community services you need.

Your doctor will then consult with the other service providers and will make a plan for your care. Once the plan has been developed, your doctor will make an appointment to discuss the findings and recommendations with you and give you a copy of the plan.

*A care plan is an important part of your care, so it is advisable that your usual doctor is the doctor involved, especially in the case of a care plan on discharge from hospital.*

If you would like a carer, another family member, or someone else to be present for the care plan appointments, please tell your doctor beforehand.

Your doctor must obtain your consent before developing a care plan. You can also tell your doctor about any aspects of your assessment you do NOT want discussed with the other providers.

### **Where and when is the care plan done?**

Most care plans will be done in the doctor's practice. However some care plans will be prepared for patients leaving hospital.

Care plans may be prepared every twelve months, and should be reviewed after three months or when needed. Significant changes in your health may indicate the need for a new care plan.

### **How do I find out the results?**

Your doctor will discuss the results and recommendations with you and give you a written summary. You will need a separate visit for this.

### **Are there any costs?**

Medicare pays a rebate for care planning. Ask your doctor about any fees involved. Sometimes you may be required to pay the other providers for their part in preparing the care plan and Medicare does not cover these fees. Any referrals to specialists or other health professionals that are recommended as part of the care plan will be charged separately.

### **How long will it take?**

15 – 30 minutes of your time, and the GP will take a further 15 – 30 minutes depending upon the complexity of your situation.

**Ask your doctor if you have any questions about care plans**

## **Patient Information: A Guide to Case Conferences for People with Chronic Medical Conditions**

### **What are case conferences?**

Case conferences involve your doctor discussing, with your permission, certain aspects of your health with other health workers and care providers involved in your care. They provide the opportunity to plan for urgent or short-term health care needs in a coordinated fashion, or to coordinate care for specific aspects of your condition.

The coordination of your longer term health and care needs would usually be undertaken through care planning (see the patient information leaflet A Guide to Care Plans).

### **Who would benefit from a case conference?**

Anyone who has a condition that lasts longer than six months (for example, diabetes, arthritis, intellectual disability or asthma), and needs the care of their GP and at least two other health workers or care providers (for example a physiotherapist, medical specialist, community nurse or other community care provider). People who require palliative care services, and people with chronic problems being discharged from hospital, may also benefit. There are no age restrictions. Even young children or teenagers can benefit from their GP communicating with other health and care providers.

### **Who conducts the case conference?**

Your doctor, or one of the other other health workers or service providers involved in caring for you. Sometimes your doctor will organise the conference. At other times your doctor may be asked to participate in a case conference organised by another health worker or service provider. If you or your carer would like to take part in the case conference, please discuss this with your doctor or care provider.

*A case conference is an important part of your care, so it is advisable that your usual doctor is the doctor involved, especially in the case of a case conference on discharge from hospital.*

### **Where and when is the case conference done?**

The case conference may take place with everyone in the same room, or it may take place over the telephone. Case conferences vary in length, depending on the complexity of the issues being discussed. The minimum time is 15 minutes, but some may last over 45 minutes.

### **What happens during a case conference?**

Prior to the case conference your doctor must obtain your consent and, with your help, decide what purpose the case conference has and what problems or issues will be discussed. For example, perhaps you have recently been discharged home from hospital, or you need extra support or care following a fall, or your circumstances have changed at home. Your doctor and the other health workers will discuss the areas of your health which require their help, and discuss ways in which they can assist you. If there is anything you do NOT wish to be discussed, please tell your doctor before the case conference takes place.

### **How do I find out the results?**

Your doctor or other health or service provider will discuss the results and recommendations with you and give you a written summary. They will check with you that you agree with the outcomes of the case conference and will discuss what happens next.

### **Are there any costs?**

Medicare pays a rebate for conducting case conferences. Ask your doctor about any fees involved. Sometimes you may be required to pay the other providers for their part in the case conference and Medicare does not cover these fees. Any referrals to specialists or other health workers that are recommended as part of the case conference will be separately charged.

**Ask your doctor if you have any questions about case conferences**