

Obtaining Your Results

As part of most consultations, your doctor may order pathology or radiology tests, in order to assist with diagnosis or to monitor a condition. At your visit your doctor will tell you how you can get the results. This will usually be by making another appointment to see him or her a few days after the test has been done. Many patients ring the reception staff to get their results. This is okay if that's what your doctor advises, but it is not ideal. It is important for patients to realise that the receptionist has no access to your result files, she can only give you the comment that Doctor has written. So for example, doctor may have

marked the result—no action. This means that the result is as expected. It does not mean that there were no abnormalities. This is why it is very important for you to actually see the doctor for the test result. Similarly, the receptionist has no access to specific details such as your cholesterol level, which you may well be monitoring as part of the management of your chronic condition. Again, this is why we have to encourage you to return for your results. By coming in and seeing the referring doctor, he or she is also able to assess your improvement and or lack thereof, spend some time on

preventative health measures, such as lifestyle risk factors and further develop the doctor patient relationship, rather than telephoning for results. **Either way, it is important that patients follow up their results.**

Just because we don't ring you doesn't mean it was all clear—do we have your current contact details?

And if we do ring you, it's because your doctor wants to make sure you are okay, or they want to give you advice about the result and options for future management. If you are requested to make a follow up appointment, please do so.

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Get Your Results

RU OK?™

A conversation could change a life.

RU OK? Day is an annual day in September dedicated to remind people to ask family, friends and colleagues the question, "R U OK?", in a meaningful way, because connecting regularly and meaningfully is one thing everyone can do to make a difference to anyone who might be struggling.

Remember we're here to help

Annual Reviews for patients with Asthma

At Hope Island and Homeworld Helensvale Medical Centres, the goal of asthma treatment is to control your asthma and improve your quality of life. There is no "cure" for asthma, but with the right treatment and the right advice, most people with asthma should be able to lead full and active lives.

This means reducing episodes of:

- Breathlessness when running up a flight of stairs;
- Waking at night coughing;
- Having to take time off from work or school because of your asthma;
- Shortness of breath when gardening, shopping or playing sport.

Is your asthma as well controlled, as it should be?

- Our practice is currently undertaking an initiative that involves reviewing patients who are receiving regular repeat prescriptions for asthma inhalers and other asthma medications. This program is based on the 2+ Visit Plan, which was developed by the National Asthma Council's General Practice Asthma Group.

How it works

- 1) Make an appointment to see the nurse for assessment and spirometry. After you see the nurse you will see

your GP for a review of the results.

2) The above is repeated 4 - 6 weeks after the first appointment. These visits are charged at the usual fees, for private patients or bulk billed for eligible patients.

It is really important, that even well controlled patients with asthma are reviewed at least annually.



Has your school or workplace got a copy of your current asthma action plan?

Make a Man Date

How often should men go to the doctor?

Forty-four per cent of doctors' patients are men and men visit their doctor less from adolescence onwards. There are no recommendations as to how often men should visit their GP and get a general health check as it depends on age, health and a whole range of other factors.

Your doctor will be able to advise how often or when your next appointment should be.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare estimates that 94 per cent of males between the ages of 45 and 54 have at least one risk factor for cardiovascular disease. A 45—49 year old bulk billed health check for eligible patients may be useful—but at very least organise a check up to help detect and prevent chronic disease, and encourage early intervention strategies.

Why is it important to know your doctor?

GPs are not just available for diagnosis and treatment of health issues; GPs are a complete health resource. There are many benefits to building a relationship with your GP. By regularly visiting the same GP, he/she will know your long-term medical history and have a better understanding of your health behaviours and needs. This then means that you can make the most of your consultation time when you are there. You are also more likely to make an appointment for the important follow-up consultation.

Developing trusting relationships can encourage men to visit the doctor, speak about their health, make positive changes to health behaviour, and make repeat visits for further health care.

If you haven't been to the doctor for a long time, or are new to the area, booking a long consultation for the first appointment will ensure that the doctor has time to take a full medical history.

And if your doctor can't help you directly with your health concern, he/she can refer you to someone else locally.

Questions for men over the age of 40:

- Am I at risk of developing any diseases and do I need tests?
- Is my family history important? • What about my prostate – should I get it checked and is a blood test enough?
- Is my weight a problem? What about my cholesterol? If I'm okay—why don't I feel so good?



Waiting for the doctor

Everyone is frustrated when the doctor runs late. We ask that you please read the following information.

We operate a 15 minute appointment system, which in fact means you have about 12 minutes to see the doctor. Patients also have a responsibility to monitor how much time they spend with their GP. If you need a longer appointment, please advise the receptionist when you book.

There are additional costs for longer appointments. However, after you receive your Medicare rebate, your out of pocket expenses aren't too different. A private patient can usually expect to be between \$30 and \$50 out of pocket.

If you have a complex problem or numerous things to discuss with your doctor, and you have only booked a normal appointment, please be aware that he or she may ask you to come back for another appointment.

If you have several matters to discuss, please raise the most important first.

Other matters can be addressed at subsequent consultations.

If you are unable to keep your appointment, please telephone.

There may be a charge for a missed appointment.

We recommend that you **always** telephone ½ an hour before your appointment time, to check if your doctor has been delayed.

If your doctor is running late, you may prefer to see one of our other doctors on this occasion. We will do our best to accommodate your request or you may prefer to reschedule.

We triage our patients in the following order

- Emergencies
- Patients with booked appointments
- Patients who are "fitted in" or have presented without an appointment

Please try to remember to make a separate appointment for each member of the family, as "extras" contribute to delays. That being said we do try to accommodate patients who are acutely unwell and one day when you or a member of your family is acutely unwell, we will do our best to fit you in as well.

While it's **not** the role of the receptionist to know why each and every patient is attending, it is helpful to assist with time management, so if you are comfortable to let the person



making the appointment know, that it is for cervical screening; an injection; an ear irrigation etc— then we can most allocate the most appropriate time.

There are simple ways you can help.

Please try to have your visit organised. Answer the following before you see the doctor –

- Why have you come here today?
- What other matters would you like to discuss? – you may be asked to make another appointment
- Have you discussed any test results?
- Do you need scripts?
- Do you need referrals?

We know it sometimes feels like you're waiting for hours and we monitor each doctors waiting times, every week. Currently the average waiting time across the practice is 34 minutes.

Thank you for participating in the recent survey!

Waiting times will never be perfect but we have listened and hope that we can work together to improve this aspect of our service. Thank you.

Home Visits and Medical Services Afterhours

Home visits are only available for our regular patients only, whose condition prevents them from attending the surgery and are usually within 6kms of the Medical Centre. The requirement for a home visit will be assessed by your regular doctor, as it may be appropriate for you to gain more urgent attention at an emergency department or, wherever possible, at the practice. This ensures more timely attention, with full resources available for your care. Requests for home visits are triaged by the practice nurse.

There are additional fees for home visits. These services are **not** bulk billed by our doctors, except in cases where palliative care is required. Frequently we may not be able to get to your home until after 6 pm, when the Afterhours deputising service can also attend and will usually bulk bill the visit. Our practice provides 24-hour care for patients through this service. They can be contacted after hours via our surgery number or by telephoning 5532 8666 directly.

Chevron After Hours are our preferred providers. They provide after hours home visits which are bulk billed. Chevron After Hours also has a surgery located at 125 Nerang St Southport,

To ensure continuing care for our patients, details of any after hours treatment by the Chevron Afterhours doctors, are forwarded to our practice on the next working day. Other afterhours providers of home visits do not always send us any information.

Chevron After Hours has a list of our doctors' after hours telephone numbers including mobile and fax numbers to ensure continuity of care. Just make sure when you call the afterhours doctor—you're calling them for care that can't wait.

Adult immunisation

Vaccination for adults is just as important as it is for children. The information provided on this page is a general guide to immunisations for adults aged 20 to 64 years old and there are more immunisations to discuss with your doctor once you're over 65. The kind of vaccines you need will depend on several factors, including:

- whether you missed out on childhood vaccines
- if you are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- your job
- how old you are
- whether you plan on travelling.
- Speak to your doctor or vaccination provider about your or your family's specific needs.

Some recommended vaccines are funded through the Qld Government while other vaccines can be purchased privately with a prescription.

Catch-up vaccines

The vaccines listed below are part of the routine childhood schedule and generally adults won't need boosters. However, you should speak to your doctor or vaccination provider if the following vaccines were unavailable during your childhood, or you're not sure whether or not you received them.

Polio Measles, Mumps, Rubella Chickenpox (varicella) Hepatitis B

Additional vaccines

The Australian Government recommends the following vaccines for adults over a certain age.

Shingles (herpes zoster)

A booster dose of a tetanus-containing vaccine is recommended for adults who are:

- aged 50 years old or more who have not received a vaccine that has tetanus in the past 10 years (but have previously completed a primary course of three tetanus doses)
- with tetanus-prone wounds (any wound that is not a clean, minor cut) if your previous dose was more than five years ago.

Whooping cough

Whooping cough (pertussis) is a serious disease that can lead to pneumonia, brain injury and sometimes death. It can affect people at any age, but is especially serious for babies.

A single booster dose of whooping cough (pertussis) vaccine is recommended for adults who are in close contact with infants. This is if it has been more than 10 years since the previous dose.

Medically at-risk

The flu vaccination is recommended for people with certain underlying medical conditions that increase their risk of serious influenza disease and complications.

Annual flu immunisation is free through the NIP for people aged six months old or over with medical conditions that makes them more likely to get severe influenza. These conditions include:

- heart disease
- chronic lung disease (including people with severe asthma who require frequent hospital visits)
- chronic neurological conditions
- impaired immunity



Flu (influenza)

The flu (also called influenza) is a very contagious infection of the airways.

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation recommends the flu vaccination for everyone aged six months or more.

Boosters

A booster is an extra dose of a vaccine that you have had before. It 'boosts' the immune system. The following vaccinations need booster doses. Diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough (pertussis)

Diphtheria and tetanus vaccinations are given as diphtheria-tetanus (dT) or diphtheria-tetanus-whooping cough (pertussis) vaccinations.

Tetanus

Tetanus is a serious disease that causes severe muscle spasms, especially in the neck and jaw (called lockjaw). It can sometimes cause

Vaccination for adults is just as important as it is for children.

Availability of Your Doctor by Telephone

The doctors at Hope Island and Homeworld Helensvale Medical Centres, may be contacted by telephone during normal consultation hours. When the doctor is with another patient, the reception staff will take a message and the doctor or their designated staff member will return your call at the first available opportunity. This minimizes interruptions during consultations. In an emergency, your call will be dealt with immediately by either your doctor or our practice nurses.

It is however, often difficult or dangerous to provide patients with clinical advice over the telephone. Often the advice will be to make an appointment or come straight down so that one of the general practitioners can discuss the issue and examine your symptoms appropriately. Our practice nurses can often provide patients with telephone advice of a general nature and again, the practice nurse may need to return your call.



Should I email the doctor?

Patients may contact their doctor by email: Hope Island reception@himc.com.au Homeworld Helensvale reception@hwhmc.com.au however this is **not** the preferred method of contact.

Never use email for urgent matters. Your doctor or designated staff member will respond to your enquiry by telephone as we are unable to guarantee confidentiality through email. It has about the same amount of privacy as a postcard

There are some important considerations that many patients are unaware of, which limit our ability to communicate with you electronically. As accredited General Practices, Hope Island and Homeworld Helensvale Medical Centres have policies and procedures which ensure our medical service complies with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners Standards for General Practice. A number of these standards relate to Privacy, Confidentiality and Information Security. The privacy and security of health information held by a practice is a legal obligation. Communication with patients via electronic means needs to be conducted with particular regard to the privacy and confidentiality of the patient's health information. It is recommended within the standards, that practices consider whether it is appropriate to communicate particular information by electronic means or whether other methods would be more suitable. Since there is a higher risk of confidentiality being breached, our clinicians will not discuss clinical matters via email. Your doctor or a designated staff member will contact you by telephone. The standards also detail that any personal health information, transmitted electronically, can only be done when security is ensured through encryption and with an electronic signature.

We take our privacy, confidentiality and information security responsibilities very seriously and our commitment to our patients is to maintain the highest standards of General Practice. Our Specialist and Allied Health colleagues are not bound by the same standards. These health professionals develop their own policies with regard to email. At Hope Island and Homeworld Helensvale Medical Centres, we will only send patient referral information via secure encrypted electronic communication channels, which involves a significant investment in the specialised technology required to do this. Again, we will discourage unsecured email communication with other health professionals because we cannot always ensure the security of that information. For further information please see our friendly reception team.



