
How to start a conversation with your primary care provider

Fearing social stigma, or simply not knowing what questions to ask, can be a barrier to seeking help. Making an appointment with your provider is an important first step toward feeling better. Before you arrive, consider the following tips to get the most out of your appointment.

Write down what you'd like to talk about

This will help you make sure you don't forget anything when you're in the office. Some things you can note ahead of time include:

- Your symptoms—These could be physical, mental, emotional or behavioral changes that you've noticed in your life.
- How your mood affects your everyday life, or how your everyday life affects your mood.
- If this is a new provider, be prepared with your medical information including other physical or mental conditions and medicine you are taking, including over-the-counter medicine and herbal supplements.
- Consider jotting down recent life changes, big and small, and whether you believe these have contributed to your changed mental state.



Have a list of questions ready

These may include:

- What steps do you typically take in identifying and/or diagnosing mental health disorders? Do I need a referral to a mental health specialist?
- How do you typically treat depression / anxiety / PTSD / other? Is medication involved and, if so, how long will it take to notice a change? What are common side effects?
- How long or how many appointments will it take to figure out a plan of action or obtain a diagnosis if relevant?
- What is your previous experience with my mental health situation or diagnosis?
- Would I benefit from mental health counseling and can you recommend a resource to me?
- Does insurance typically cover this appointment / medication / diagnosis process?
- Do you have any brochures or other printed material on my condition that I can take home with me?
- Is there anything I can try at home such as self-help tips or lifestyle changes?