



Men's Health Script – Refugee Health Literacy Project

www.communityhealthhub.com.au

Seeing a Doctor

- In Australia most people go to a family doctor (a GP) regularly. They go when they have sickness or when it is time for a health check-up to look for any internal sickness that you cannot see to stop you getting sick. It is good to have a health check every year even if you do not feel sick. This check means the doctor can look for internal sickness that cannot be seen and make sure you get any treatment you need. You can ask your GP to put in their computer to ring you each year to come in for a health check. Men often do not go to the GP for checkups. It is very important to start going to the family doctor/GP for checkups regularly. When you are there tell your GP/family doctor about everything you know about your health/body and especially any changes in your health/body that you have noticed.
- Some sicknesses start by little sign that non health professionals may not be able to discover. It is good to see the GP even if you are not feeling sick. Even if you have no pain or can't feel anything wrong at all it is still important to have your health regularly checked.
- GP is someone you can trust and for a better treatment they need to be aware of everything about your health.
- It is very important to make sure you go to the GP/family doctor and talk about everything. You may find this very hard to do as you may feel shame or embarrassment. However, GP/family doctors are used to talking about these

things. They understand that it might be difficult for you and they will help you. They will not look at you with shame. It is important even if you feel shame or embarrassment that you have courage and go and talk to the GP/doctor. They will help you to make sure your health problems are looked after.

- GP doctors look after your sickness in your body but also sickness that comes from stress. It is important to keep healthy mentally, as well as keep healthy physically.. You can go to the GP/Doctor and talk to them about how you are feeling, this can involve family problems, not having enough sleep, relationship problem they can also help you see a specialist doctor or another specialist to help you.
- They look after you and work out what needs to be done to help you be well. Sometimes a person will need medicine for a short time. Sometimes a person will need to take medicine every day for a long time to prevent more serious health problems. Sometimes the doctor will recommend that you see other people who are experts e.g. experts in healthy foods (dieticians) or healthy eyes (optometrists).
- You are able to choose your own GP doctor. You are able to ask for a man or a woman GP. If you are not happy with your GP doctor you can choose a new GP. When you are choosing your GP, it is a good idea to ask friends, family members or people in your community about which GPs they are happy with. If you find English difficult, then you should ask if your GP knows how to use interpreters or ask whether there is a GP who speaks your language.
- Most GP doctors work by appointment times. It is important to ring or go and make an appointment at the medical centre. When you make the appointment, let the receptionist know that you will need an interpreter so that they can book one for you. You cannot just turn up and expect to see the doctor straight away. If you just turn up you may be asked to leave or have to wait a very, very long time and still may not see the doctor. If you are very sick, then when you make the appointment you should tell them that you are very sick so that they know this.
- It is important to arrive at the medical centre about five minutes before your appointment time. Sometimes, if you turn up late, your appointment will no longer be available and you will have to make a new appointment and come back another day.
- When you go to your appointment, you need to go into the medical centre and tell the receptionist that you are there before you sit down. Then the receptionist will put your name into the computer so that the doctor knows you

are waiting. Then sit down and wait for the receptionist or doctor to call your name for your appointment. If you need an interpreter, it is good to remind them that you need one for this appointment.

- When your name is called you go in to see the doctor and tell them why you are there.
- You can get the most benefit from your visit to the doctor by thinking ahead of time about all your health problems and making sure you remember to tell him about everything that is troubling you.
- Tell the doctor about all the medicines you are taking. This includes herbal medicines, traditional medicines, remedies, vitamins and herbs. It is good to bring all your medicines you are taking with you to show the doctor, especially if this is the first time you have seen this doctor.
- If you cannot go to your appointment you must ring and cancel your appointments ahead of time. Some GPs and Specialists may want you to pay a cancellation fee if you weren't at the surgery at your appointment time and you didn't ring and cancel.
- If you need an interpreter for the doctor visit please tell the receptionist when you make the appointment. If you want an interpreter during your appointment with the doctor tell them what language or you may want to show them your "I need an interpreter card". Also tell them whether you want a face to face interpreter or a telephone interpreter. A face-to-face interpreter can take a couple of weeks to book.
- Doctors are always able to use free interpreters no matter what day or time it is. The doctor can ring the Doctor Interpreter line 1800 131 450 to get a phone interpreter.
- If you need an interpreter to make the appointment at the GP/doctor please ring 13 14 50 and ask for your language, wait for the interpreter and then tell them which doctor you want to make the appointment with and their phone number.
- Official interpreters are trained to keep information confidential. They are not allowed to speak about your personal problems with anybody else outside of the consultation with the doctor. Your information will be kept private.

When you visit your GP/family doctor it might be important for you to talk about some of the following topics to them:

Sexual Health

Some sicknesses can be passed from person to person during sexual contact. Many of these sicknesses you might not know you have until you get very sick or you have trouble having a baby.

You can catch sexually transmitted infections from other people when you have sex with them. You can catch HIV and other sexually transmitted illnesses like gonorrhoea, syphilis, chlamydia and human papilloma virus (warts) through contact with bodily fluids during sex and you can also catch Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C through unsafe or unprotected sex. Unprotected means without a condom. It is very important to wear condoms.

Having a sexual health check at the GP/doctor helps to see if you have some of these invisible sicknesses. The doctor might do blood and urine tests and might take a swab if you have blisters or sores that are on your penis. The doctor might ask you if you have burning or itchiness or if it hurts or burns when you pass urine. If you notice that these sores blisters come and go it is important to tell your doctor even if they are not there when you see the doctor.

If you have had a discharge from your penis that is not usual for you, please tell your doctor. Many infections in the penis can be treated. Some problems are not caused by sexual contact but can be irritated by it. There are many things that can be causing this problem and you should not feel shame or embarrassed talking to the doctor about this. Tell your doctor if you have been using herbs to try to help with problems with the penis. You might just need some tablets or cream to make this much better. After your treatment, the doctor might ask you to come back for a check up to make sure that the problem is healed. Even if you feel well, you should return for that check up, so you can be sure the infection is gone.

Also if you are going to have a sexual relationship, especially with someone new, it is really good to talk to your GP doctor about ways for you and your partner can be safe from infections. Using condoms is important and will help to not get sicknesses from sexual contact.

HIV& Hep B/C

In Australia, there are still many people who have HIV and Hepatitis B and C infections. You should practice safe sex so you reduce your chance of catching these infections. This means you will protect yourself against many sexually transmissible infections by wearing condoms and also having the tests done by your doctor for you and the person you have sex with. It is important to remember that a person can have HIV or another sexual infection and still look very well. You cannot tell who has an infection by looking at them. Sometimes the person with the infection does not know they have the infection because they have not been for a check up with their doctor. Even if they had a check up before, if they have had another sexual partner since that check up, they may have caught a new infection which they could pass onto you.

You should not feel shame talking to the doctor about sexual infections or HIV or Hepatitis. In Australia there are many things that can be done to keep you well for a long time if you do have these infections. You will be able to work with your doctor to get a plan for this.

If you go back to Africa or anywhere else and have sex with someone while you are away, it is important to use condoms when you have sex and get another check when you come back to Australia. It is also important to wear condoms every time you have sex until you have the test results back, and then also wear condoms if you have sex with someone new.

Looking after Chronic (long term) health conditions

If you have blood pressure problems, heart problems, diabetes or other diseases or health problems that last for a very long time you will need to manage these for a very long time. There is not a one week or one month treatment. You must take care of your health and follow the doctor's instructions about the food you eat all the time – maybe you need to stop eating sugar and stop drinking soft drink or alcohol, maybe you need to also do regular exercise like walking for 30 minutes every day, maybe you need to stop smoking, you might need to take special medication every day for a long time, or you might need to get regular blood sugar tests. It is very important to talk to the doctor and follow your doctor's instructions and keep doing what they say for the long time, maybe years, and not just a few weeks. Your GP/doctor can tell you how long you need to keep doing these things. You will need to go back for the doctor for check ups even if you are feeling well. Sometimes your doctor will arrange blood tests to make sure that you are staying healthy.

Urinary Symptoms

If you have some of these symptoms:

- difficulty passing urine
- a slow, interrupted flow of urine
- frequent passing of urine, including at night
- incontinence - urine coming out unexpectedly when you are not going to the toilet

It is important to talk to your GP/family doctor about them.

Family Planning (making sure you don't have a baby unless you plan to have one)

Family planning or contraception means prevention of pregnancy. In Australia, the **men** and the women are expected to take responsibility for their family planning – not just the woman. If a woman gets pregnant, then the father of the child is expected to support the child until they grow up and the taxation office will take money from the wages to make sure that the child is supported.

There are a number of different methods of contraception and it is important to choose the one that best meets your needs. Using a method you are happy with means you will be able to enjoy sex without the worry of an unintended pregnancy.

Talking with your GP/family doctor about all methods of family planning or contraception will ensure that you have enough information to choose the one that suits you best.

Fertility (when you want to have a baby and it isn't happening)

Sometimes when you want to have a baby, it may be that you are not becoming pregnant. If this is the situation, visit your GP/family doctor and talk about your concerns. Fertility testing can be done to find out why pregnancy is not happening. It is very important that both the women and the men agree to have the fertility testing. If as a man you refuse to have a fertility test when you and your wife are trying to have a baby, then they will not let her have any more tests. This means that your doctors won't be able to work out why it is not happening and you and your wife won't be able to get help from the doctors to get pregnant and have a baby.

Vaccinations

Australia has a national immunisation program that provides immunisation to certain groups such as children, free of charge. Ask your family doctor (GP) for more information about this program.

In Australia there are some vaccinations for things that are different to the vaccinations available in your home country. When you come to Australia, some of these vaccinations, such as hepatitis B can be arranged for you for free from the government if you ask your doctor. Even if you have had some vaccinations before, if you don't have your records the doctor may advise you to have more vaccinations to be sure you are fully protected. This is to keep you safe from certain diseases that can be fully prevented or made less severe by having these injections.

It is really important that you have all of your needles to be properly protected. With some of the vaccinations your GP doctor or nurse will say that you need to have, you might need to have them monthly for a few months to make sure your body is fully protected against the germs. It is very important to check with your GP doctor about

whether you have had all your injections – this would mean you have probably been back to the doctor a few times for injections.

Medicines

Instructions for taking the medicine are written on the label stuck onto the medicine bottle. If you do not read English, ask your pharmacist to use a telephone interpreter to explain how to take medicine. They can use the interpreter line TIS for free, just ask them or show them your 'I need an interpreter' card. Once you understand the instructions, it is good to tell someone else the instructions straight away so there is someone else who also knows how you must take your medicine.

You might ask an interpreter to write on it the packet or you can mark the packet / bottle in some way so you know what it is for and when to take it e.g. 2 red dots = heart medicine, take twice a day.

Some medicines are available to buy at the counter of the pharmacy without getting a prescription from the doctor. These are things like headache tablets, cold and flu tablets etc. For most medications you must see your doctor/GP and get a prescription and then take the prescription to the pharmacy to purchase the medicine. If you are not sure whether the medicine you want is available to buy at the pharmacy without a prescription, you can go in and ask them or use a phone interpreter to ring and ask. Phone the interpreter service on 13 14 50 ask for your language and then ask the interpreter to ring the pharmacy.

If you have a health care card always show it to the pharmacist when you are getting your medicines. Some medicines, but not all, are cheaper if you have a health care card.

When taking medicine:

- DO NOT take medicines that have been prescribed by a doctor for someone else. They could make you VERY sick.
- DO NOT use medicines that are old and that are past the expiry date (you can ask the pharmacist to show you the expiry date when you are buying the medicine)
- DO NOT give medicines that the doctor prescribed for you to someone else including overseas relatives. They could make someone else VERY sick. They are especially for the sickness you have, not other people's sickness which might need different medicines.
- Make sure you keep medicines up high away from where children can reach them. If children find your medicines and take them it might make them very

sick. If you think a child has taken some of your medicine you should call 000 for an ambulance immediately and have the medicine with you to tell the operator the name. Tell them if you need an interpreter.

- ALWAYS keep taking the tablets for as long as your doctor told you to. Some tablets like antibiotics, you need to take until they are all finished and some medicines you might need to take always – for example - for blood pressure and diabetes. Ask your doctor what to do when your medicine runs out. If this is what the doctor has told you DO NOT stop taking the medicine even if you are feeling better. Talk to your doctor before stopping any medicines they have asked you to take. If you are on regular medicine every day, pay attention when you only have a couple of weeks medicine left. If your doctor gave you a repeat prescription then you can arrange to go to the pharmacist for some more. If you don't have a repeat prescription, you should make an appointment to see your doctor so you can have a check up and get some more medicines if you still need them.

Go back to your doctor and tell them if you don't get better or you start to feel worse - sicker

- Talk to your doctor if you are forgetting to take your medicines or it is difficult to take them - there may be things that can be done about this
- When you are buying the medicine make sure you ask the pharmacist about how to store the medicine. Some medicines need to be in the fridge and other medicines need to be kept in the cupboard.
- Always tell your doctor about what other medicines you have been taking or are taking now, including herbal and traditional medicines and medicines you might have just bought from the pharmacy, to make sure that the medicines do not react with each other and make you sick. If you react to a new medicine then make sure you remember the name of that medicine so you can tell other doctors in the future. You may wish to ask your doctor to write down the name of the medicine on a piece of paper that you keep in your wallet.
- Always tell your doctor if you are allergic or react to any medications
- Sometimes doctors or Specialists in Australia prescribe medicines differently than in your home country. Sometimes you can visit the doctor when you're sick and the doctor does not give you a prescription for medicine. Sometimes the doctor may use injections differently from your home country.
- Many doctors in Australia think that stress or pressure or worries can also cause you to feel sick. Your doctor may want to talk to you about your stress

or want you to learn some relaxation exercises rather than give you medicine.

- When the doctors in Australia think that you can stop being sick or stay healthy by having a healthier diet with more fruit and vegetables and less sugar, caffeine or salt or doing some exercise or other activities this may seem strange to you. But the doctors have studied these things and they know that these things can help make you feel better.

Vitamin D

People and children with dark skin are at risk of low levels of Vitamin D.

If you do not have enough Vitamin D you can have:

- aches
- cramps
- pain in your muscles
- bones that become soft and break

It is important to talk to your GP/family doctor about Vitamin D and have a test if needed. Also if you get medication for Vitamin D you must keep taking it for a long time. Do not just take it for a couple of weeks and then stop. You must keep taking it for a long time until you visit your doctor and your doctor says to stop.

Cancer

Sometimes you can't see cancer and you don't feel sick. These cancers are invisible. That's why it is important to have your health checks with your family doctor but also to have cancer screenings / check-ups which is where they check for invisible cancers inside you. Your GP/family doctor will be able to tell you about how to organise these screenings for you when they are needed.

If you have cancer screenings / check-ups then the doctors have a better chance of finding the cancer very early. Treatment can be more effective when cancer is found early and in Australia lots of things can be done about cancer. Keep an eye out for any unusual changes to your body.

Testicular cancer

In some men, testicular cancer does not cause any noticeable symptoms. Other men may notice one or more of these symptoms:

- swelling or a lump in the testicle (usually painless)
- a feeling of heaviness in the scrotum
- change in the size or shape of the testicle (e.g. hardness or swelling or a lump)
- aches or pain in the lower abdomen, testicle or scrotum

These symptoms don't necessarily mean you have testicular cancer. They are common to other conditions, such as cysts, which are harmless lumps. However, if you have any of these symptoms, you should have them checked by your doctor without delay. If you have any of these it is important to go to see a GP/family doctor very soon and talk to them about it.

Prostate cancer

It its early stages prostate cancer may not show any symptoms, though symptoms of early prostate cancer can include:

- difficulty passing urine
- a slow, interrupted flow of urine
- frequent passing of urine, including at night
- incontinence – urine coming out

symptoms of advanced prostate cancer include:

- blood in urine
- pain during urination
- lower back or pelvic pain

These symptoms don't always mean cancer, they can be other things that are not cancer. It is important to talk to you doctor and not feel shame. Your doctor needs to know so they can help you get treatment for these troubles.

Bowel cancer

Not all bowel cancers show symptoms, however you should go and see your GP/family doctor if you notice:

- Bleeding from your back passage or any sign of blood after a bowel motion (poo)
- A change in bowel habit (poo) such as constipation (can't do a poo) or diarrhoea (too much running poo)
- Stomach/abdominal pain or bloating
- Weight loss for no reason or no appetite for no reason
- Tiredness, weakness or breathlessness for no reason

These symptoms don't mean you have cancer, but any unusual or persistent (continuing) symptoms you should go to your doctor immediately.

There is a simple screening test that looks for hidden traces of blood in your poo and can help find bowel cancer early. This test can be done at home with a test kit and then you send/post it away for the result. People should talk to their GP/family doctor about this. There is no need to feel shame it is important to talk about these

things with your GP/doctor. They are used to talking about these things. Doctors usually recommend this test when people are over 50 years old.

If you have any unusual changes in your body that you have noticed, then make an appointment with your GP/family doctor as soon as possible and tell them about these changes. They may not be caused by cancer but it is important that your doctor checks these changes.

Getting information on cancer

There is an organisation called the Cancer Council who can give lots of information about all types of Cancers. If you want to talk to someone at the Cancer Council this is what you can do:

- Call 13 14 50, Monday to Friday 9am-5pm
- Say the language you need
- Wait on the line for an interpreter (may take up to 3 minutes)
- Ask the interpreter to call the Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20
- Talk to the Cancer Council Helpline with the help of your interpreter.

WHAT can I do to stay Healthy?

Eating unhealthy food and drinking alcohol can increase your risk of some cancers. Eating lots of fruit and vegetables every day can help to protect you against some cancers. If you eat healthy – lots of fruit and vegetables every day, do not eat much salt or sugar or fat, make sure you don't drink much alcohol or soft drink at all – drink water instead, and do not get fat and do some exercise each day such as 30 minutes of walking or going to the gym, you can help reduce your risk of some cancers. Stopping smoking cigarettes is also very important to help prevent you from getting cancer.

Healthy foods:

- eat 2 serves of fruit and 5 serves of vegetables every day
- drink plenty of water. In Australia it is safe to drink water from household taps

Unhealthy foods:

- avoid foods and drinks high in sugar, and caffeine, like soft drinks and energy drinks, sweet drinks and drink your tea without sugar
- avoid lollies/sweets/confectionery, cakes and sweet biscuits
- Do not eat deep fried and other fatty foods like chips, pies, pizza, hamburgers and chocolate

- Many take-away foods have a lot of fat and sugar in them so avoid having these foods regularly.

Also:

- choose foods low in salt and do not add extra salt
- do at least 30 minutes of physical activity on most, preferably all, days. You can break it down into three lots of ten minutes of activity.
- kids need to do more physical activity than adults – they need at least 60 minutes of activity each day. Physical activity is important for their growth and development. Examples are walking, riding a bicycle or playing sports.

Teeth

It is important to keep your teeth healthy. Clean your teeth morning and night after eating and get a dental check up each year. If you have pain in your mouth, it is good to see either the GP or a dentist.

Stress and Pressure

If you are feeling stress and pressure, and things are getting tough. Maybe you are drinking more alcohol or becoming angry easily then it is important to go to your GP/family doctor and tell them about it. There are lots of things the GP/doctor can do to help you not feel so much stress and pressure.

If you have a lot of stress and pressure and there were things that happened to you before you came to Australia you can get help from QPASTT. You can call QPASTT Duty Officer on (07) 3391 6677 Monday to Friday

Maybe you have trouble sleeping, bad dreams, feel sad a lot, feel angry a lot, avoid things that remind you of the past, don't trust anyone, can't concentrate, think about the same things over and over again, or feel worried and annoyed all the time, or don't want to be with your family or friends any more or don't want to go out at all or do any activities.

It is good to talk about these things with your GP/family doctor and get some help for your stress and pressure.

Healthy relationships

A lot of changes happen when you come to Australia. The culture is different; there are different rules and different social expectations on what is acceptable in our relationships with our family. The journey to Australia plus the difficulties you may face place stress on all relationships, especially on those closest to us: our families. If you are unhappy or arguing or angry with your family often it is important to go to the GP/family doctor and talk to them about this. They will be able to give you the name of the right place to get help to change this. Also in Australia, physical fighting, hitting and other violence to others, especially to your wife, children and other family, is not acceptable from men or women.

Emergencies

- If you or someone in your family is sick you should go to your GP doctor. However, if you have been to the doctor and the person gets worse and very sick, you might need to call the ambulance. If someone has chest pain, or difficulty breathing or a serious accident, then these are also times when you would call an ambulance. This is called an **emergency**.
- The telephone number you call for an **emergency is 000**. The operator will ask you whether you want police, fire or ambulance. Say Ambulance. If you need to speak to someone in your own language ask for an Interpreter and say your language. Then you must wait for the operator to get an interpreter, do not hang up just wait for the interpreter.
- It is important to remain calm, and you will need to say what the emergency is, and your name and the address of where the emergency is. They should tell you approximately how long it will be until the ambulance arrives.
- Stay on the phone as the operator might ask you questions about the sick person and give you some instructions while you are waiting for the ambulance. You can stay on the phone until the ambulance arrives.
- If the ambulance doesn't arrive and you are worried, you can call 000 again and tell them you have phoned before and you are still waiting.
- At the time of filming this video the Queensland government fund the Queensland Ambulance Service, so for **Queensland residents** using an ambulance in an emergency is free of charge. Using an ambulance in an emergency if you are a Queensland resident is not connected to any other bills such as electricity so these bills will not increase if you use an ambulance in an emergency. If you want to know more about costs and your particular circumstances you can ring the interpreter service on 13 1450 ask for your language and then ask the interpreter to ring the Ambulance on their normal phone number of 13 12 33 and then you can ask about costs of using an ambulance in an emergency using the interpreter.

- Medicare Card

You can use your Medicare card to get free or subsidised medical treatment when you see a GP/family doctor. You can use your Medicare card:

- when making a claim for a paid or unpaid doctor's account at a Department of Human Services Service Centre
- when visiting a doctor who bulk bills or a doctor who can lodge your claim for you online
- when you are treated as a public (Medicare) patient in a public hospital
- when getting subsidised Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme prescriptions filled at the pharmacy

To make sure you can access these benefits you should:

- check the expiry date on the card—call Department of Human Services Medicare by first calling the an interpreter via TIS on 13 14 50 then ask for your language and then ask the interpreter to call Medicare on 132 011 if your card is out of date. We will automatically replace your card before it expires, and send it to the address we have recorded
 - check we have your current address so you receive your replacement card or important information from us. For parents of young children, correct details will also ensure you will receive immunisation history statements from the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register
 - make sure you destroy your old card when you receive your new Medicare. Your old card is cancelled in our records when your new card is issued.
- Health care card

A Health Care Card entitles you to cheaper prescription medicines at the pharmacy under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and to various concessions from the Australian Government. You may also get some of these concessions for a dependent child.

Consent and Privacy

Consent

Prior to receiving treatment from any doctors or nurses you must provide consent. You should make sure you understand the treatment before you give permission for it to happen. Usually you can do this by talking and asking questions and saying yes or no to the doctor. Sometimes you might need to sign a written consent form. You can ask for a friend or family member to help you with this if you like. Or you can ask for an interpreter to read the form to you.

It is very common that you will need to sign a form if you are having a special test or an operation. You should make sure you understand what is going to happen before you sign the form. You can ask for an interpreter if you don't understand what is being talked about. You should not sign a form that you do not understand.

Generally a parent or adult carer can consent to the treatment of a child. However, sometimes a child under 18 years old can provide their own consent if a doctor believes the child is old enough and mature enough to understand what they are giving consent to.

Privacy

Everyone has a right to privacy and for information about them and their health be kept confidential. This means that all the health workers will only give information to other health professionals who are actually involved in your health care. This means information cannot be given to your family or friends unless you give your permission.

Some laws require health staff to give information to other government departments, such as information about the birth of babies, information about deaths and information about vaccinations and infectious diseases but this information is then also kept private as the same rules apply.

Interpreters also have to follow the same rules and should not talk about things they have interpreted for you to other people, even when they come from your community.