

# **Women and Doctors**

## **A guide to getting the most from a visit to the doctor**

Stay as long as you need

Tell as much as you know

Ask questions – get answers

You are important

### **You and Your Doctor**

Find a doctor you feel comfortable with.

Take a list of all that is worrying you & write them down so you don't forget.

It's OK to take a friend with you.

Take deep breaths, relax, pause. Stop to think about the message you are trying to get across.

You can tell the doctor if you are nervous.

You have the right to stay as long as it takes – don't go till you are ready.

You can ask the doctor to write down clearly what you need to know.

If you don't feel happy, you can make another appointment or go to another doctor.

Do give feedback to the doctor if you are unhappy with the visit.

**Be firm. Insist.**

**Take control of your visit to the doctor.**

### **Check list for your visit to the doctor:**

Have I told the doctor honestly:

- ❖ Any medicines I am taking?

- ❖ What I think is wrong with me?
- ❖ My past history such as asthma, heart problems, varicose veins, depression, allergies etc?
- ❖ Whether I smoke?

Before leaving, have I found out:

- ❖ What could be wrong with me?
- ❖ What may have caused it?
- ❖ What I can do about it?

Do I need a referral to a specialist?

### **If you are told you need MEDICINES you can ask:**

#### **Is the medicine:**

- ❖ Really needed?
- ❖ The only alternative?
- ❖ Safe for me?

What are the possible side effects of this medicine?

Is there any interaction with any other medicines I am taking?

#### **How long:**

- ❖ Will the treatment last?
- ❖ Until I feel better?
- ❖ Until I should return?

### **If you are told you need TESTS you can ask:**

What is done to me?

#### **Are the tests:**

- ❖ Really needed?
- ❖ The only alternative?
- ❖ Safe for me?
- ❖ Free of side effects?

### **If you are told you need an OPERATION you can ask:**

- ❖ Is it absolutely necessary?
- ❖ **WHY?**

- ❖ What happens during the operation?
- ❖ Is it done with a general anaesthetic (asleep)?

**What are:**

- ❖ The risks to me?
- ❖ The advantages?
- ❖ The disadvantages?

**How long:**

- ❖ To wait?
- ❖ In hospital?
- ❖ In recovery?

**You can also ask:**

- ❖ How will I feel?
- ❖ Will I feel pain?
- ❖ What can I do and not do during recovery?
- ❖ Will I need support?

**Ring up the doctor or the hospital if you are unsure about anything.**

Many Women feel they do not get the treatment they deserve when they go to the doctor. Many report not being listened to, believed or respected. It is important to remember:

**YOU ARE IMPORTANT**

For more information about your rights and help with problems contact:

Women's Health Victoria  
1800 133 321

WIRE – Women's Information and Referral Exchange  
1800 136 570

Your local Community Health Centre

A Women's Health Service in your region

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Revised and reprinted May 2001.

Originally developed as part of the Women's Health Information in Plain English Project (1992) auspiced by Loddon Mallee Women's Health Inc. (formerly known as Loddon Campaspe Women's Health Service) and funded through the National Agenda for Women Grants Program.