

Teen Talk - Can I see the GP or Nurses on my own?

Did you know that if you want to see a doctor or nurse you don't always have to have your parents with you, or even their permission to come here and be seen.

Different people are ready at different ages to see a doctor or a nurse alone, and legally there is no set age to be seen without your parents. You can come alone or can even bring them along and leave them in the waiting room if you wanted to be seen by the doctor or nurse on your own.

But what if....

I am over 18?

There's nothing to worry about, hurray! Legally you're an adult now and your parents don't have to give permission for any type of treatment, nor are they able to discuss your records/conditions with the doctor unless they have **your** permission. Make sure that you update the surgery if Mum or Dad picks up your prescriptions for you; we need to know that you've said it's ok!

I am 16 or 17?

The situation is almost the same as when you are 18. The doctor will just have to make sure that you are 'competent' to make decisions about your own treatment. This simply means that you are able to understand the treatment and the effects it might have on you.

I am under 16...?

The law says that you can make your own decisions about having treatment. This includes getting contraception, and also discussing/having an abortion, without your parent's permission.

This will generally be the case if:

- You are regarded as 'competent' – This means that you have to clearly understand the treatment you will be receiving, and also how it will affect you.
- Your health will suffer if you don't receive this treatment, and that the treatment is in your best interests.

So if you are 17 or under, the GP will have a chat with you about the problem, the treatment and will try to make an assessment through this discussion as to whether you are 'competent' to make the decision yourself. They will probably ask you why you don't want your parents or care givers to know, and may suggest talking it through with them first. It is

worth remembering however that no doctor can persuade or force you to tell your parents about the treatment that you are having.

Doctors also cannot tell your parents about your treatment (even if you are under 16) if you don't want them to, apart from in very exceptional circumstances – see below for more details. This is called doctor-patient confidentiality, and all doctors and nurses are legal bound by it.

This discussion and decision might sound a bit intimidating or scary but don't let it put you off, GPs really are concerned about your health and want to make sure that everyone, including teenagers, can come to see their doctor without worrying. Your doctor will almost certainly be very kind and very sympathetic – if you would like to see a particular doctor, be it one you know or just specifically a lady or a man, just mention it to the patient coordinator when you book the appointment and it can be arranged.

When did you say they would tell my parents?

As we said – *anything* you discuss with the GP or nurse; any treatment you've had, any results or medicines, stays confidential. This means that the doctors, nurses, patient coordinators on the phones or behind the desk... anyone who works at the practice must not pass on any information about you, or any other patient, to anyone who does not have your permission to hear it.

Even if you are under 16, nothing can be said to anyone - not your parents or anyone in your family, your care workers, tutors or teachers, without your permission unless safeguarding concerns are identified . Even if your Mum and Dad are really friendly with the doctor you saw, outside of work hours. They can't even say that you were in the surgery...

But what if I'm spotted?

If you *do* have to visit the surgerywe're sorry, there's no way around this difficulty... But you could ask one of our patient coordinators if they could find you a discrete area to wait in. Unfortunately, another patient might mention to your parents that they saw you in the waiting room so you should always be prepared for a question or two... Same goes for the chemist, but you could try to time it for when the shop is empty. Like the doctors and nurses, the chemists are legally bound to keep any information about your prescriptions confidential.

Don't forget though, you can also do one of the following:

- submit an [eConsult](#) online
- book a telephone appointment 01420 477111 (Forest Surgery) 01428 713511 (Badgerswood Surgery)
- if you're in crisis, ring the Samaritans on **116 123**

We are here when you need us from 08:00 to 18:00



Can I bring someone else instead?

Please do! We would in fact encourage you to bring someone with you, if it's a friend from school or college, an older brother or sister or even an adult friend. It just has to be someone you trust, and someone you don't mind talking about your problem in front of. Just mention to the doctor or nurse calling you in that you would like them to come in with you. Like your parents though, you can leave them in the waiting room if you just want them there for moral support.