

# Dr R Kapur & Partner

## **GUIDE TO ACCESSING SERVICES for YOUNG PEOPLE (13 to 16 years old)**

When you are young, your parents are usually involved in your health care. They may make decisions for you, and speak to health workers on your behalf. But as you get older you have more rights. You can decide if you want your parents to be involved or not. This leaflet explains your rights once you are thought to be old enough to make your own decisions about your health care information.

Patients under the age of 16 should normally be accompanied by an adult when seeing a doctor or collecting medicines. However, under certain circumstances, patients below this age may be seen by a doctor, for example, if parents know that the child is at the surgery. Young people may also see a Doctor without parental knowledge to discuss sexual health matters, including contraception.

### **Who is this leaflet for and what's it about?**

This leaflet is for you if you're under 16. It explains that anyone who looks after your health has to keep information about you private. This may be doctors, nurses, pharmacists or other health workers.

The leaflet tells you only about how things work in the health service, not other organisations such as your school or social services. If you want to talk to a health worker about something personal, they must keep this information confidential, even if you are under 16. This may be information about:

- Sex
- relationships
- pregnancy
- contraception
- drugs and alcohol, or
- feeling down

Sometimes health workers do need to share information about you to give you good care. They may share information about you with other health workers who are looking after you – for example, health workers at another hospital or clinic if you have agreed to go there. This is to make your care safer, easier and faster.

They will only share information that is needed to give you the best care. If there are particular things that you don't want to be shared, tell your health worker. If they think you are at risk of serious harm or you are in danger, they may have to tell another adult about it to be able to help you. But even then, they should tell you they are going to do this and explain who they will tell and why.

Sometimes the law allows the health service to share information about you without you agreeing to it. This would only happen in very serious situations – for example, if you have an illness that puts other people at risk, such as meningitis.

### **How do I get a doctor?**

If you're over the age of 16, you can register with a GP by yourself. You can find a list of local GP's in your area on the NHS website. If they are accepting new patients, they will ask you to fill in a registration form. Some GP's also ask to see a proof of identity like a passport or proof of address like a mobile phone bill.

If you're under the age of 16, your parents or carers should register you at a doctor's surgery, but it doesn't have to be same one as them or the rest of your family. If you don't want your parents to know, you can still register by yourself but you might be asked some questions to make sure you're okay.

### **How do I make an appointment?**

You can make an appointment by calling your GP surgery and speaking to the receptionist or going there in person. The receptionist will probably ask you who the appointment is for and why. This is to make sure that you see the right person at the right time.

If it's something personal then you don't have to tell them why - just say it's for something personal. You can also ask to see a male or female doctor if this would make you feel more comfortable.

### **Can I make appointments without speaking to someone?**

If you're struggling with anxiety or feeling worried, try explaining this when you make the appointment to see if they can help in any way.

Also, perhaps try to take a trusted friend or family member with you for support. It can take a while to build yourself up to seeing someone, but it's so important because then you'll be able to get help to feel better.

### **Can I see a doctor by myself?**

Yes. There is no reason why you can't ask to see the doctor by yourself. They might want to find out why and might encourage you to tell your parent or carer. But they should try to understand how you feel if you don't want to.

### **What happens if I don't like my doctor?**

Most doctors are great at their job and care about their patients a lot. But, there are times when people either don't get on with or feel uncomfortable with their doctor. You can always ask to see someone else. You may not be able to do this straight away and might have to wait for another appointment, so it's better to say as early as possible.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

### **What does confidentiality mean?**

It means keeping information safe and private.

The health service keeps all your health information confidential. This includes:

- anything you say
- information someone writes about you, and
- details of any treatment you have had

You can talk to health workers about anything to do with your health.

### **Will my parents be given information about me?**

Usually, health workers are not allowed to tell your parents anything you have talked to them about, unless you have agreed to this. But the health worker may suggest that you speak to your parents or an adult you trust. A health worker may want to send out information to you. If you don't want your parents to see this, you can:

- ask them to post it to a friend's address
- say you'll pick it up, or
- ask them not to send anything

If you're feeling nervous or stressed, take a look at our anxiety and stress page for ways to cope.

### **What if my parents want to look at my health records?**

Your health records include information about your health and any treatment you have had. Your records can be written on paper, held on computer or both. Usually your parents can't see your health records, unless you agree to this. If there's something in your health records that you don't want your parents to see, tell a health worker.

If your doctor doesn't think you can make decisions about your health care, your parents may be allowed to see your health records without you agreeing to it. But this would only happen if the doctor thought it was best for you.

### **Can I see my own health records?**

Yes. You should be able to see your records in a way that you can understand. Any codes or words you don't understand should be explained to you. You may want to know about treatment you've had, or check that information about you is correct.

It's your choice whether to look at your health records. You may have to pay to see them. But you will be told about this first.

### **Who else can see my records?**

Sometimes, people who inspect child protection services may ask to look at the records of young people who have been involved with these services. This is to make sure that children are protected from harm. These inspectors must keep your personal information safe and private, unless they think you are in danger.

### **What if I'm unhappy about how my information has been kept or used?**

If you think that what you've told a health worker hasn't been kept private or that something in your health records is wrong, please tell one of the health workers who

has been involved in your care, or ask your parent or another adult you trust to do this for you. If you're still unhappy, it's okay to make a complaint.

## **CONTRACEPTION**

Most methods of contraception won't protect you against catching or passing on a sexually transmitted infection (STI). Condoms are the only method that protects against both STIs and pregnancy. Protect your own and your partner's health by using condoms as well as your chosen method of contraception.

### **Where to get free contraception**

You can get free contraception and condoms from:

- most GP surgeries – talk to your GP or practice nurse
- community contraceptive clinics
- some genitourinary medicine (GUM) clinics
- sexual health clinics – these offer contraceptive and STI testing services
- some young people's services

Find your nearest sexual health service, including contraceptive clinics. Many of these places offer information, testing and treatment for STIs, including chlamydia. If you've been exposed to the risk of pregnancy, you may also be at risk of catching an STI.

There are lots of contraceptive methods to choose from. You should use a method that suits you, not just because your friends are using it. Don't be put off if the first method you use isn't quite right for you – you can try another.

### **Will they tell my parents?**

Contraception services are free and confidential, including for people under 16 years old. This means the doctor or nurse won't tell your parents or anyone else, as long as they believe you're mature enough to understand the information and decisions involved.

There are strict guidelines for healthcare professionals who work with people under 16. If they believe there's a risk to your safety and welfare, they may decide to tell your parents.