

Why do we need a GP in the 21st century?

Alex Coombs



Those with long memories will recall the days of your Haemophilia Treatment Centre (or HTC) being a ‘one stop shop’ for a variety of health problems. However, this wasn’t sustainable and hasn’t been the practice for many years.

What has been increasingly obvious is that health issues of all sorts continue for everyone as we all age. This is where having a General Practitioner (GP) comes in.

Building a relationship with a local GP who is kept informed about your medical history is the recommended primary contact point for your general health matters and to help you apply for and complete the variety of medical documentation required for your government assistance, community services or employers.

This enables your HTC to provide specialist care and focus on the care, coordination, education, and treatment that relates to your bleeding disorder.

WHAT CAN A GP DO FOR ME?

You are always encouraged to contact your HTC for advice, and particularly when you think that it is related to your bleeding disorder.

However, there are many times when your GP should be your first point of contact for non-emergency and preventative medical care.

GPs are trained in medicine and are qualified to treat people for general health problems, such as illnesses or injuries that cannot be treated by over-the-counter medication. Some GPs also specialise in particular areas, such as children’s health, mental health or aged care for example.

Better Health Channel - Seeing a doctor or general practitioner (GP)¹

Throughout your lifespan you will experience a range of health problems that are not related to your bleeding disorder.

You may also find routine medical check-ups with your GP will benefit you by keeping you up-to-date on your overall health status and may prevent some health conditions or detect them early enough to treat them more effectively. This includes health screening, such as skin checks, blood pressure checks or cervical screening.

Your GP can support you by co-ordinating the variety of government or workplace application forms which require medical summaries for services, including the Disability Support Pension, Unemployed (now known as Jobseeker) temporary sick leave, Disability Parking Permits, Office of Housing Medical Priority Forms and National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). This may involve requesting specialist reports from your HTC on specific questions, but your GP can help complete the overall application. Your GP can also help with referral to other local community services.

GPs are experts in managing your general health. Your chosen GP is encouraged to call the HTC for advice if they have any doubts or questions regarding your bleeding disorder or they suspect the presenting issue may be related to your bleeding disorder.

It is essential that you select a GP whom you feel comfortable to talk with about the difficult or complex parts of your health. You may base your choice on recommendations from others, the GP's gender (if you feel that they will be more sympathetic or empathetic towards you), or from your ethnic/cultural/language group. Alternatively, you may visit multiple GPs in your local area until you have chosen one who you are comfortable with, maybe even one medical centre with several GPs to choose from, until you find the best person to coordinate your overall healthcare.

Once you have the name of your preferred GP and their medical centre, make sure you inform your HTC and update the HTC when you change GPs. Your HTC can ensure your GP is kept informed with summaries from each clinic or admission you have at your HTC hospital.



See your GP for:

- minor injuries and illnesses (if you have a serious injury or illness, call an ambulance on triple zero (000) or go to your nearest hospital emergency department)
- health advice
- prescriptions for medicines
- ongoing care if you have a chronic condition
- health screening, such as cervical screening, or blood pressure checks
- vaccinations
- general care during pregnancy
- general care for children
- care if you're feeling overwhelmed or depressed
- a medical certificate, certified document or report about an injury.

HealthDirect – The role of a GP ²

Ask your GP to liaise with your HTC around care for your bleeding disorder.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP)

T: 1800 472 247

E: racgp@racgp.org.au

Useful links:

1. Better Health Channel (Vic Govt Dept of Health) - Seeing a doctor or general practitioner (GP) - <https://tinyurl.com/BHV-Seeing-GP>
2. HealthDirect (Australian virtual public health information service) – The role of a GP - <https://tinyurl.com/HD-GP-role>

This article is adapted with permission from ‘Why do we need a GP in the twenty-first century’, The Missing Factor, the newsletter of Haemophilia Foundation Victoria (www.hfv.org.au), Autumn 2022, pages 10-12.

.....
Alex Coombs is Social Worker – Haemophilia & Other Inherited Bleeding Disorders at the Ronald Sawers Haemophilia Centre at Alfred Health, Melbourne
.....