



## Why Does Your Doctor Run Late?

You may have experienced your Doctor running late. Before we explain how and why your Doctor can run late, below are the available appointment types you can book.

- **Standard Appointment** – 15 minutes to discuss 1 issue.
- **Long Appointment** – 30 minutes to discuss 2 issues OR a mental health consult OR for a procedure eg. Pap Smear.
- **Extended Appointment** – 45 minutes to discuss 2 or more issues OR for a complex procedure eg. Iron Infusion, Skin Lesion Excision.

Running late for your appointment is not ideal for you, other patients, your Doctor and as well as reception and nursing staff. Below are examples of common scenarios which cause delays and Doctors to run late, and what can be done to prevent this.

### Common Scenarios Causing Delays

- **Incorrect Appointment Type Booked** – booking a standard appointment for multiple issues.
- **“Lists”** – bringing a “list” of multiple issues without having booked a longer appointment, and not presenting the “list” at the beginning of the appointment. Occasionally, the third or fourth item may be serious or complex and can't be ignored and the Doctor may feel obliged to cover all issues. Patients may also present their list in their order but it may not necessarily be in the order that the Doctor thinks is important. If you have a list, provide it at the beginning of your appointment.
- **Additional Family Members** – patients booking only ONE standard appointment but requesting additional family members to be seen in the same appointment.
- **Additional Matters** – patients booking only ONE standard appointment but requiring additional matters to be addressed eg. Drivers Licence Medicals, Centrelink Medicals, other forms.

## How to Prevent/Avoid Delays

Did you know that just 5 extra minutes per appointment means that a Doctor will be 1 hour behind by the end of their morning session.

We are looking at ways to help Doctors not run late. Below are some measures to help Doctors run on time:

- Your doctor requires **long appointments for patients with multiple issues** or a long list of problems. Let reception know at the time of booking if you need a long appointment.
- When booking your appointment explain to reception what you require, who can then advise on the length of time you will need.
- **All mental health related matters require a long appointment.**
- Use “**HotDoc**” **App** to book your appointment – this can guide you in identifying the appropriate appointment type.
- Call the practice ½ - 1 hour before your appointment to ask how your Doctor is running – reception will be able to give you an update on wait time. Reception will also endeavour to call patients in advance to advise if their doctor is running behind schedule.
- Don't save up a “**Shopping List**” of your health concerns over a long period of time. Book a regular appointment with your Doctor or any available Doctor.

## Common Misconceptions

- A sore throat can be straight forward... or it can be complicated, requiring more time.
- “It's just a script!” This is never the case. Your Doctor is required to provide a consultation and take a history before providing a script. This involves reading your notes, in some circumstances taking your blood pressure, or doing an examination. This all takes time.
- “It's just a referral!” Again, this is never the case. Your Doctor is required to provide up-to-date clinical information in the referral which may involve an examination. Again, this all takes time.
- Following up normal results are easy to deliver if the person is well and expecting them. However, abnormal or unexpected results require time to explain.
- Abnormal results can upset patients requiring additional time to console them.
- Emergencies happen – these emergency events take priority and are often out of everyone's control. We ask for your understanding during these events.

## Patients are Human

- Some people are anxious and scared about their health and simple things may take longer to explain.
- People may have disabilities – they take longer to sit down or enter the room and leave, need interpreters or have trouble understanding.
- Sometimes people need convincing.

## Doctors are Human

- They feel stressed, especially when they are running behind.
- They often feel obliged to meet patients' requests even when presented with multiple issues when only a standard appointment is booked.
- They get tired and need a coffee, and they also need to have a lunch break.
- They also need to go to the bathroom.

Please always notify reception if you have been waiting longer than 20 minutes for your appointment.

We hope this gives everyone a better understanding of some of the difficulties faced on a day-to-day basis in General Practice. If we all work together, we can try to minimise any delays.